

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25



**OMBUDSMAN**  
City of Johannesburg

***Advancing administrative justice through citizen-centred oversight.***

This year's theme, "Advancing administrative justice through citizen-centred oversight" affirms our commitment to fairness, accountability and responsiveness in the City's administration. The visual motif of squares symbolises the diversity of Johannesburg's residents and emphasises our focus on administrative justice that recognises and serves all citizens.




# OMBUDSMAN

City of Johannesburg

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An aerial, high-angle photograph of a dense urban landscape, likely a city center, rendered in a monochromatic orange color. The image shows a variety of building heights and styles, including modern skyscrapers and older, more ornate structures. The perspective is from a high vantage point, looking down on the city. The text "PART 1" and "MESSAGES" is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font.

# PART 1

## MESSAGES

# FOREWORD: CITY OF JOHANNESBURG OMBUDSMAN

On behalf of the Office of the Ombudsman for the City of Johannesburg, we are proud to present the Annual Report for the 2024/25 financial year. This report provides a clear, strategic overview of our institutional performance and offers stakeholders, partners, and the broader public valuable insight into our mandate, achievements, challenges, and impact. It reflects the dynamic governance environment in which the Ombudsman operates and reaffirms our role as an essential mechanism for administrative justice and a trusted, accessible point of support for residents seeking recourse.

Over the past year, the Office has further strengthened its role as an independent and impartial oversight authority committed to addressing maladministration, service delivery failures, and unfair treatment across the City and its municipal entities. Our overall organisational performance outcome, measured against the annual aggregate performance target, reflects measurable progress in delivering on our mandate. This achievement affirms our operational efficiency, reinforces confidence in our governance practices, and -demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that residents experience tangible improvements in the way the city responds to their concerns.

This reporting period also highlighted the growing importance of pro-active community engagement in advancing our mandate. Through targeted outreach initiatives and an expanded digital presence, the Office reached more than 9 300 residents directly and nearly 6 million individuals through broadcast and online platforms. These media engagement figures are independently verified. Collectively, these efforts contributed to a 14% increase in public awareness, enhancing our visibility, accessibility, and responsiveness - particularly among communities that have historically felt marginalised within the City's service delivery landscape.

While we acknowledge and celebrate these milestones, we remain mindful of the challenges that persist. Strengthening inter-departmental co-operation, ensuring the consistent implementation of corrective actions and further expanding public awareness continue to be key strategic priorities. Addressing these areas will require disciplined governance, sustained collaboration and a shared commitment to excellence across all spheres of the City's administration - all while maintaining a compassionate understanding of the lived realities of our residents.

We as the Office of the Ombudsman extend our sincere appreciation to our stakeholders, the City's administration, and the residents of Johannesburg for their on-going partnership, trust, and engagement. As an Office, we remain steadfast in our mission to uphold fairness, accountability, and justice - ensuring that all residents have access to an effective, credible, and trusted platform for redress, and that no one is left behind.

Best regards,



**Adv. Siduduzo Gumede**  
Ombudsman: City of Johannesburg

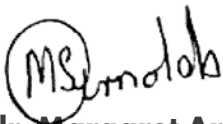
# MESSAGE OF SUPPORT: CITY OF JOHANNESBURG SPEAKER

On behalf of the City of Johannesburg, it is my pleasure to extend this message of support to the Office of the Ombudsman for the vital work it continues to do in strengthening accountability, promoting fairness and restoring public trust in the City's administration.

As Speaker, I wish to reaffirm that this Council fully supports the work of the Ombudsman. It is essential that we continue to strengthen the Office's capacity, enhance collaboration with departments and entities, and ensure the consistent implementation of its recommendations. The Ombudsman cannot succeed in isolation; its impact relies on the responsiveness of every department, every entity and on the collective commitment of this Council.

Let us therefore renew our support for this critical institution, not merely as a compliance obligation but as a partner in building a city that is fair, inclusive and truly responsive to its residents.

Together, let us ensure that Johannesburg remains a city where accountability is not optional but a standard, we all uphold.



**Cllr. Margaret Arnolds**  
Speaker: City of Johannesburg

An aerial, high-angle view of a dense urban landscape, likely a city center, with numerous skyscrapers and multi-story buildings. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

# PART 2

## STRATEGIC OVERVIEW



## STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

To fulfil its mandate effectively, the Office employs a range of strategic instruments designed to enhance institutional performance, transparency and agility. These include a performance management system, ongoing stakeholder engagement, capacity-building programmes and internal planning and review processes.

One such vehicle is the Extended Executive Management Team (EEMT) engagement, which provides a platform for strategic reflection and alignment. Last year, the Office reviewed its 2023/24 performance, adopted key close-out reports, including those on the Performance Management System and Employment Equity and introduced new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for critical units such as Intake and Registry, Complaints and Investigations and Communications and Media. These developments reflect a commitment to operational consistency, service excellence and alignment with the 2025/26 Business Plan.

Through these integrated efforts, the Office continues to foster a culture of accountability, responsiveness and high performance. In a governance landscape that is increasingly dynamic and complex, strategic planning is not a periodic exercise but a continuous process; one that ensures the Office remains agile, purpose-driven and impactful.

For the Ombudsman, strategy is not merely a formal document but a living framework that underlines the Office’s commitment to strengthening public trust, upholding human rights and advancing fairness for all residents of Johannesburg.



### VISION

To serve as a responsive investigator and mediator of service delivery and human rights-related complaints in the City of Johannesburg.

These include:

- **Fairness:** Treating everyone with impartiality and justice.
- **Accountability:** Taking responsibility for actions and decisions.
- **Integrity:** Upholding honesty and strong ethical principles.
- **Transparency:** Maintaining openness and clear communication in all processes.
- **Accessibility:** Ensuring services are easily available to all members of the community.



### MISSION

To be an office of last resort that contributes towards accelerating service delivery and promoting a culture of respect for human rights by investigating maladministration to improve confidence and the accountability in the City of Johannesburg.



### VALUES

In fulfilling its mandate, the Office of the Ombudsman for the City of Johannesburg is guided by core values that direct the conduct of all staff and service providers.



## EXECUTIVE TEAM



**ADVOCATE SIDUDUZO GUMEDE**  
Ombudsman

Adv. Gumedu holds an LLB and an LLM and is a British Chevening Scholar. He is a strategic leader with over 10 years of experience in public-sector governance, institutional turnaround, and compliance oversight. As the Ombudsman for the City of Johannesburg, he brings deep expertise in PFMA/MFMA compliance, stakeholder engagement, and legal advisory, with a proven record of driving organisational transformation and restoring public trust. He established and operationalised the City's first Office of the Ombudsman, developing governance frameworks that have since been adopted nationally and oversaw the drafting of the Ombudsman By-Law (2014) and its subsequent revision in 2023. Under his leadership, the Office—now a member of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI)—has strengthened citizen-engagement initiatives, resulting in strategic interventions that significantly improved service-delivery complaint management and promoted active citizen participation.

He currently oversees an R89+ billion municipal budget across multiple entities and departments. Notable achievements include co-chairing the G20/U20 Sub-Working Group on Urban Management (2025) and contributing to a landmark Constitutional Court ruling that safeguarded billion in Treasury claims. Prior to his current role, he practiced as an Advocate of the High Court, handling high-profile litigation and providing legal advisory services to government and corporate clients. He has also served as Legal Advisor at BP Southern Africa, Senior Legal Advisor at the Financial Services Board and Legal Advisor at Old Mutual South Africa.



**ADVOCATE COLMAN RAMONTJA**  
Acting Executive Manager: Complaints and  
Investigations Unit

Colman is an admitted Advocate with an LLB and Postgraduate Legal Training. He began his career as a Legal Officer at the Unisa Legal Aid Clinic, conducting client consultations, screening cases and drafting court documents. He later served as an Investigator at the Public Protector of South Africa, assessing complaints, conducting investigations and providing legal advice on matters affecting administrative justice and service delivery.

He subsequently joined the Office of the Ombudsman for the City of Johannesburg, rising to Senior Manager. In this role, he oversees complex investigations - often involving municipal billing disputes, credit control issues, and service-connection challenges - while managing a team of investigators and ensuring optimal use of the internal complaints lodging and case management system. He also chairs alternative dispute resolution processes to achieve fair, timely and legally sound outcomes for residents.

With extensive expertise in investigations, legal research, stakeholder engagement and dispute resolution, he has completed professional development programs in the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA), Public Procurement Law, Trial Advocacy and Project Management.



## EXECUTIVE TEAM



### ADVOCATE XOLANI GILA

Acting Executive Manager: Intake and Registry Unit

Xolani is an admitted Advocate of the High Court (2013) and holds an LLB, a Postgraduate Certificate in Compliance Management and a Certificate in Legislative Drafting. He has also completed the Senior Leadership Development Programme and is a Certified Mediator. With more than 15 years of experience in the public service sector, he has developed extensive expertise in complaints resolution, investigations, compliance and human-rights protection.

Throughout his career, he has made significant contributions to policy and legislative reform, including amendments to the Maintenance Act and the development of the City of Johannesburg Ombudsman By-Law (2023). These efforts have advanced more accessible, transparent and accountable public-sector processes.

A strategic and results-driven professional, he has led and facilitated complex investigations, strengthened internal governance frameworks and supported institutional reforms that enhance public trust. His work consistently reflects the Batho Pele principles, and he remains dedicated to promoting transparency, fairness, and accountability across the public sector.



### MS. NOMBULELO NTSHIKLANA

Executive Manager: Management Support Unit

Nombulelo holds a BSocSci, MPA, and an MBA. She began her public service career at the Department of Public Service and Administration, where she supported key functions such as strategic planning, risk management and performance monitoring. She later joined the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality as Head: Administration and Logistics within the Group Corporate and Shared Services Department, providing high-level administrative, compliance and logistical support to the Group Executive Director and ensuring operational efficiency aligned with organisational priorities.

In her current role, she plays a central part in driving strategy development, coordinating business planning processes, and strengthening enterprise risk management across the office. Her work directly enhances organisational performance, supports informed decision-making and guides the institution's strategic direction.

With extensive experience in corporate governance, financial oversight and stakeholder engagement, she is committed to aligning administrative and support functions with broader public-sector objectives. Her approach is grounded in service excellence, accountability and continuous improvement.



## EXECUTIVE TEAM



**MS. CORRINE LEKHOANE**

Acting Executive Manager: Communications and Media Unit

Corrine holds a BA in Communications and Psychology and an MBA. She is a strategic communications leader who leverages communication as a catalyst for organisational transformation. With extensive experience in public-sector engagement and stakeholder relations, she drives initiatives that strengthen institutional credibility, transparency and measurable impact.

Her career began as a Communications Officer at the Gauteng Department of Public Transport, Roads and Works, where she managed media relations, events and publications. She later advanced to Manager: Communications at the Gauteng Provincial Legislature, leading the Communications Unit and shaping the strategic direction of government messaging. Subsequent leadership roles at the Gauteng Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture, IPES-UMS, and the City of Johannesburg's Transport Department further refined her ability to align communication strategies with institutional goals, stakeholder coordination and public engagement.

In her current position, she drives the Office's strategic communications agenda - amplifying its mandate, influencing public discourse and empowering citizens through knowledge and accessible information. By engaging key stakeholders, including media, ward councillors, academic institutions and civic partners, she ensures communication efforts do more than transmit messages: they catalyse meaningful change, enhance service delivery and foster a culture of accountability, trust and active citizen participation.



**MS. MANOSHI NEVHUNGONI**

Acting Executive Manager: Finance Unit

Manoshi holds a BCom (Accountancy), a BCTA and a Certificate in MFMA. She began her career at the Office of the Auditor-General as an External Auditor, gaining seven years of experience in audit and compliance. She later joined the City of Johannesburg as an Internal Auditor before progressing to Accounting and Budget Operations Manager, further building on her strong foundation in financial management. She went on to serve for five years as Deputy Director: Finance, overseeing key functions such as budgeting, reporting, and financial controls.

Since joining the City of Johannesburg in 2006, she has worked across several departments, including Group Risk and Assurance Services (GRAS), the City Manager's Office, the Transport Department and Group Forensic and Investigation Services (GFIS). With more than a decade of experience in public-sector finance, she brings deep expertise in financial governance, auditing and budget management.



# ANNUAL PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW: A STRONGER VOICE FOR RESIDENTS

## Delivering Fairness, Accountability and Impact in 2024/25

In a city as complex and dynamic as Johannesburg, the role of the Office of the Ombudsman remains vital in ensuring that fairness, accountability and responsive governance are more than just principles but are put into practice. During the 2024/25 financial year, the Office demonstrated measurable progress across its core mandates, resolving complaints, enhancing service delivery and empowering communities through outreach and various media engagements.

## Performance Highlights: A Year of Tangible Results

The Office closed the financial year with a strong overall organisational performance of 79%, achieving 11 out of 14 key performance indicators (KPIs).

### Key achievements included:



**603 complaints** were closed at Intake and Registry level.



The office conducted **43 Outreach** campaigns, reaching a total of **9 300 residents**.



A refund of almost **R100 million** was paid back to residents, through account reversals and credits.



Media engagements generated over **two million** of PR value, with an audience reach of **six million**.

These results reflect ongoing efforts to streamline processes, enhance internal capacity and adopt a more data-driven and proactive approach to complaint handling.

## Building Public Trust Through Community Outreach

Beyond resolving complaints, the Ombudsman focused on increasing visibility and improving access to its services. The 2024/25 financial year witnessed the following:

Digital engagement also grew significantly. Website traffic, Google Business calls and social media followers, especially on X (formerly Twitter) surged, with the Ombudsman's account surpassing 2 500 followers.

This sustained communications effort not only enhanced public awareness of residents' rights but also reinforced the Ombudsman's role as a trusted advocate for the community. One that listens actively and responds meaningfully to the concerns of the people.



# **PART 3**

## COMPLAINTS HANDLING, MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT



## INTAKE AND REGISTRY UNIT

At the heart of Johannesburg's public accountability framework lies the Intake and Registry Unit - the first point of contact between the city and its residents. Often serving as an entry point to the complaints resolution process, the unit plays a pivotal role in setting the tone for fairness, empathy and efficiency. Each day, it engages with residents seeking assistance and sometimes, answers – working diligently to ensure that every voice is heard, every complaint acknowledged and every case directed to the appropriate channels.

### A Year of Progress

In this financial year, the Intake and Registry Unit made significant strides in improving early response and resolution rate. A total of 1 737 complaints were registered and processed, with 99% escalated to relevant units within the prescribed turnaround time. The Unit continued to improve its internal processes, capturing and registering complaints within an average 14 days, while 99% of new complaints were assessed within 21 days - reflecting an unwavering commitment to speed, accuracy and residents' satisfaction.

### Where it matters most: Impact on residents

Behind every complaint is a real person – a resident with a challenge, concern or unresolved service issue. The Intake and Registry Unit saw this firsthand as it facilitated resolutions in high-impact areas of service delivery:

- 368 complaints related to City Power
- 272 complaints involving Joburg Water
- A significant volume of cases related to rates and valuations, as well as Group Finance (Revenue).

The team's responsiveness has directly contributed to restoring trust between residents and the City by ensuring complaints are not just acknowledged but acted upon.

### Understanding the City: Regional Trends and Case Distribution

Using data-driven insights, the unit gained a deeper understanding of complaint distribution across the City's regions, helping to guide resource allocation and engagement strategies. In the year under review,

603 cases were closed at Intake

- 1 134 complaints were accepted for investigation and assigned to the Complaints and Investigations Unit
- Region F recorded the highest number of accepted complaints (269), followed by Region B (162) and Region A (138)

These insights are instrumental in identifying service delivery and ensuring the city remains responsive to region-specific challenges.

### Continuous Improvement through Reflection and Adaptation

In this financial year, the office revealed great strides made in adaptation, growth and continuous improvement. The unit captured approximately 1 249 complaints across documented quarters, a slight decline from 1 721 in 2024/25, which potentially signals improved upstream resolutions within City departments or closure rates at intake rose in efficiency. As the unit continues to serve the residents of Johannesburg, it reaffirms its commitment to upholding their dignity and rights. The team remains dedicated to providing a fair, efficient and transparent complaints resolution process, empowering residents to hold the city accountable and drive positive change.

This year also marked a phase of reflection and refinement. The Unit recorded 1 249 complaints across documented quarters, a notable decrease from 1 721 in 2024/25. While the reduction in volume may signal improved upstream resolution efforts within City departments, it may also reflect increased efficiency in closure rates at Intake; ensuring that fewer complaints are escalated unnecessarily.

Internally, the team has embraced a culture of continuous improvement, investing in systems that prioritise transparency, fairness and accountability. Whether addressing complaints at Intake or guiding cases through to investigation, the unit remains steadfast in its mission to uphold resident dignity, service integrity and a more responsive City administration.

## Looking Ahead: A Resident-centric Future

As the Intake and Registry Unit moves forward, it reaffirms its commitment to providing a fair, compassionate and transparent complaints resolution process. The work done at this early stage of engagement is often unseen, but it is vital. It is here that residents first encounter the Ombudsman’s promise to listen and act.

By empowering residents to hold the City accountable, the Unit not only resolves complaints but it helps build a more just, inclusive and responsive Johannesburg for all.

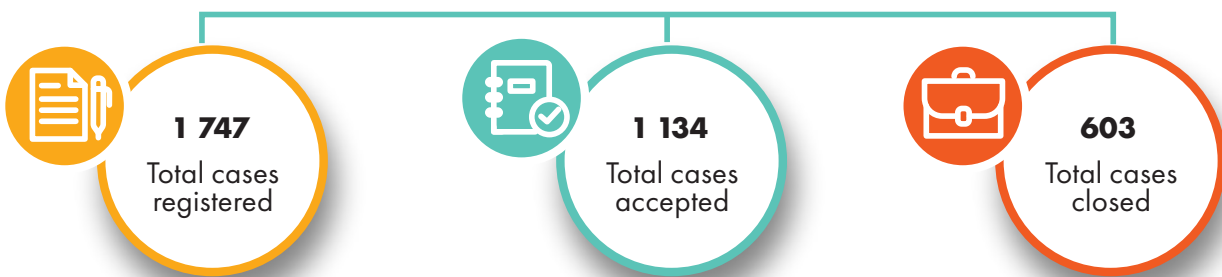


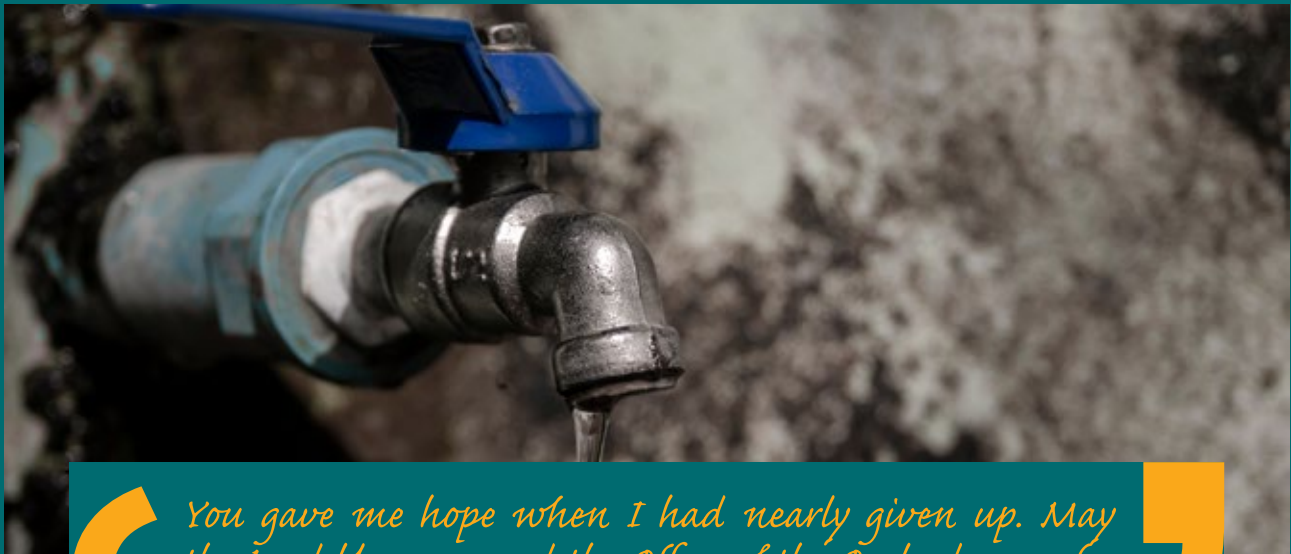
Figure 1: reflecting the total number of registered, accepted and closed complaints

COMPLAINT STATUS	TOTAL
Complaints outside the jurisdiction of the Office.	11
Complaints withdrawn by complainant during the assessment process.	17
Complaints closed via internal referral to the City of Johannesburg departments and/ or entities. Where complainant was advised to exhaust City complaints processes with internal stakeholders before approaching the Office.	33
Complaints closed after a preliminary investigation or complainant’s acceptance of the outcomes.	388
Complaints deferred for preliminary / pending submission of supporting documents beyond 7 days those that are awaiting preliminary investigation responses.	154
<b>Total</b>	<b>603</b>

Table 1: Outcomes of Validated Complaints

**Note:** Complainants failed to exhaust the City’s internal processes prior to escalating with our Office and were subsequently referred to the respective departments and/or entities. Additionally, deferred cases relate to outstanding information from the department/entity and/or complainant.

# FOCUS: A NINE-YEAR BATTLE ENDS - MAMABOLO'S STORY AND THE POWER OF ACCOUNTABILITY



*You gave me hope when I had nearly given up. May the Lord bless you and the Office of the Ombudsman for being a voice for the voiceless.*

For nearly a decade, \*Karabo Mofokeng, a resident of Diepsloot Ext. 11, battled with the City of Johannesburg over a water billing issue that began shortly after she inherited her late father's property in 2017. What should have been a simple account transfer quickly turned into a prolonged struggle as her municipal bill escalated unexpectedly, from a zero balance to more than R22 000, with no clear explanation and no resolution despite repeated attempts.

Her case was not just about numbers. It reflected the real emotional, financial and psychological toll that systemic inefficiencies can have on residents, particularly those navigating these challenges alone.

On 7 June 2025, Karabo attended the Revenue Shared Services Open Day in Region A, hosted at Rabie Ridge Community Hall in partnership with the Office of the Ombudsman. The event brought together various City departments and entities, including City Power, Johannesburg Water, Revenue and Valuations, aiming to help residents resolve service delivery and billing concerns.

Although she hoped the event would finally bring closure, Karabo left disappointed, her issue remained unresolved. It was only when she met the Outreach Team from the Office of the Ombudsman that the tide began to turn. The team took the time to explain her rights, the complaints process and the importance of supporting documents and reference numbers.

Encouraged, Karabo gathered years' worth of documentation and formally lodged a complaint with the Office detailing how her account, previously settled, had begun to reflect abnormally high charges due to estimated readings from a water meter she suspected was faulty. Despite numerous visits to City offices across Diepsloot, Midrand and Johannesburg, she had received little assistance. Reference numbers were issued and later closed without resolution, while her bill continued to climb.

Within two weeks of receiving her complaint, the Intake and Registry Unit initiated a preliminary investigation, which uncovered that Karabo's meter had been faulty as far back as 2018 and was only replaced a year later. Despite this, estimated billing continued unchecked. The Office's Lead Investigator, undertook a thorough investigation, working with Johannesburg Water to verify the legitimacy of the charges and determine whether account adjustments were warranted.

Her efforts paid off. Johannesburg Water acknowledged the faulty meter and confirmed that Karabo's account qualified for correction.

Karabo's case brought more than individual relief but also sparked a broader realisation within the City of Johannesburg about the recurring nature of such complaints. Her experience illustrated the often-fragmented approach to municipal billing, where residents are passed between departments without resolution.

In response, departments like Johannesburg Water and City Power have begun overhauling their billing systems, taking full ownership of their revenue processes and working towards more transparent, accessible and integrated customer service channels. These reforms aim to prevent residents like Karabo from falling through the cracks.

Karabo described her experience with the Ombudsman as transformative. From her first interaction with the Outreach Team to the regular updates she received from Intake and Investigation, she felt heard, respected, and supported, something she had not experienced in nearly a decade of trying to resolve her issue.

*"You gave me hope when I had nearly given up. May the Lord bless you and the Office of the Ombudsman for being a voice for the voiceless."*

The Office of the Ombudsman is proud not only to have helped resolve Karabo's long-standing complaint but also to have played a role in prompting departments to reassess their approach to billing and customer service.

Her case is a powerful reminder of the importance of administrative justice, and of the Office's unique role in elevating resident voices, driving systemic change and restoring trust in local government - one complaint at a time.

\* Not complainant's real name

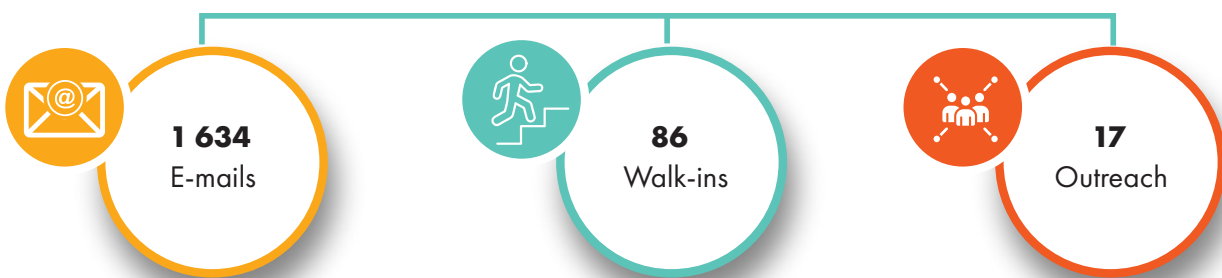
## Complaints Channels: Enhancing Access and Empowering Residents

In an ever-evolving city as diverse and dynamic as Johannesburg, ensuring equitable access to services remains at the heart of the Ombudsman’s work. Over the past year, the Office has continued to break down barriers that have historically made it difficult, especially for residents from underserved communities, to seek redress and accountability.

By embracing a omni-channel approach, the Office has remained firmly within reach of residents across all regions of the City. Whether through walk-ins, community-based outreach campaigns or digital platforms such as our website, WhatsApp and email services, the goal has remained clear: make it easier and more convenient for residents to raise their voices and have their grievances heard.

This year, the Office received 12 097 complaints, reflecting the ongoing need for an accessible and trusted complaints mechanism. A particularly notable development was the sharp increase in email submissions, rising from 4 210 in 2023/24 to 8 554 in 2024/25. This shift signals a growing preference among residents for digital engagement, and more importantly, a vote of confidence in the efficiency and responsiveness of our evolving service model.

Beyond the numbers, this transition reflects something deeper: a changing relationship between residents and their city, one where accessibility is not just about proximity, but about ease, trust and empowerment. By reducing friction in the complaints journey and embracing the communication tools people use every day, the Office is not only enhancing its service delivery but enabling more residents to advocate for their rights with dignity and confidence.



**Figure 2: Registered Complaints via channels complainants used to interact with the office**

*The figure above reflects the total number of individuals who engaged with the Office, ranging from inquiries about complaint status to requests for advice or referrals on matters outside our jurisdiction. Note: Not all interactions involved formal complaints. These are stats from all registered complaints.*

## Regional Complaints Profile

The Office of the Ombudsman remains committed to providing all residents of the City of Johannesburg with free, fair and accessible services, regardless of their location or background. The following map illustrates the continued expansion of the Office’s regional footprint, reflecting both increased visibility and growing public confidence in the Office as a trusted, last-resort avenue for resolving municipal complaints.

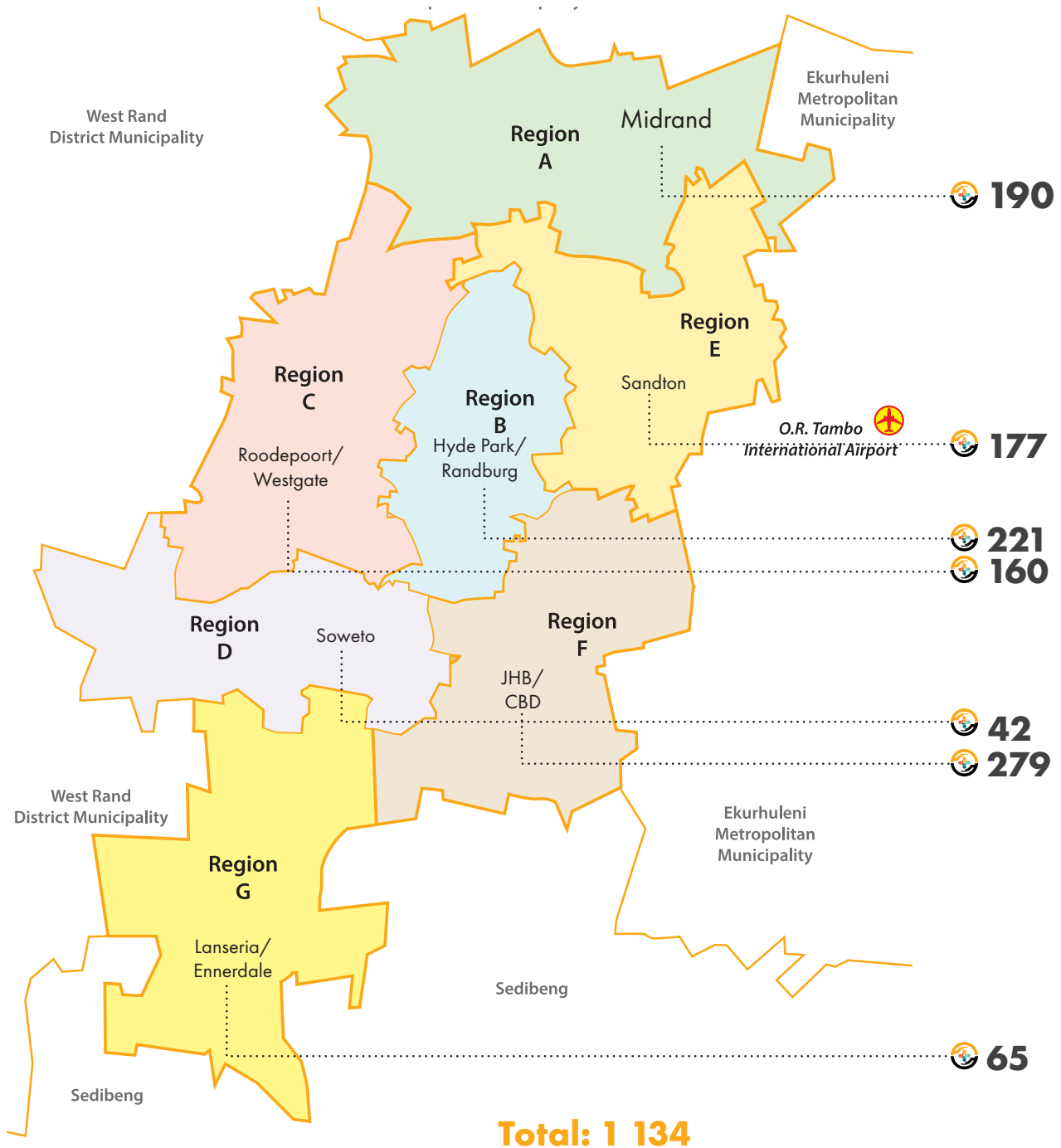


Figure 3: Johannesburg Regional Map

## Complaints by City Departments and Entities

The Office of the Ombudsman plays a crucial role in surfacing the systemic challenges that residents face daily, particularly in the delivery of essential services. This year, the Office received a total of 468 complaints against the City of Johannesburg’s Finance Department (Revenue), the highest among all departments and entities. This was followed by 344 complaints against Johannesburg Water, 147 against City Power and 66 more complaints related to the Finance Rates Department.

These numbers are more than statistics but a reflection of deep-rooted issues within the City’s service delivery ecosystem. Complaints related to Revenue and Rates point to ongoing confusion and frustration around billing practices, account management and a perceived lack of transparency in municipal financial processes. At the same time, the high number of complaints against Johannesburg Water and City Power exposes persistent infrastructure failures, frequent water supply disruptions and growing concern over electricity reliability and affordability, particularly in the context of recent tariff increases.

By documenting and investigating these complaints, the Office continues to shine a light on the underlying causes of administrative breakdowns, providing not only individual recourse but also systemic insight that can inform better governance. The nature and volume of complaints serve as a diagnostic tool, pointing to service delivery failures that, if left unaddressed, can erode public trust in local government.

Importantly, the increased use of the Ombudsman by residents is a shift in how communities engage with the city. More residents are asserting their rights and turning to the Office as a credible, independent platform for redress. This growing reliance reinforces the value of the Ombudsman as an early warning system and one that identifies as well as elevates structural issues before they deepen into crises.

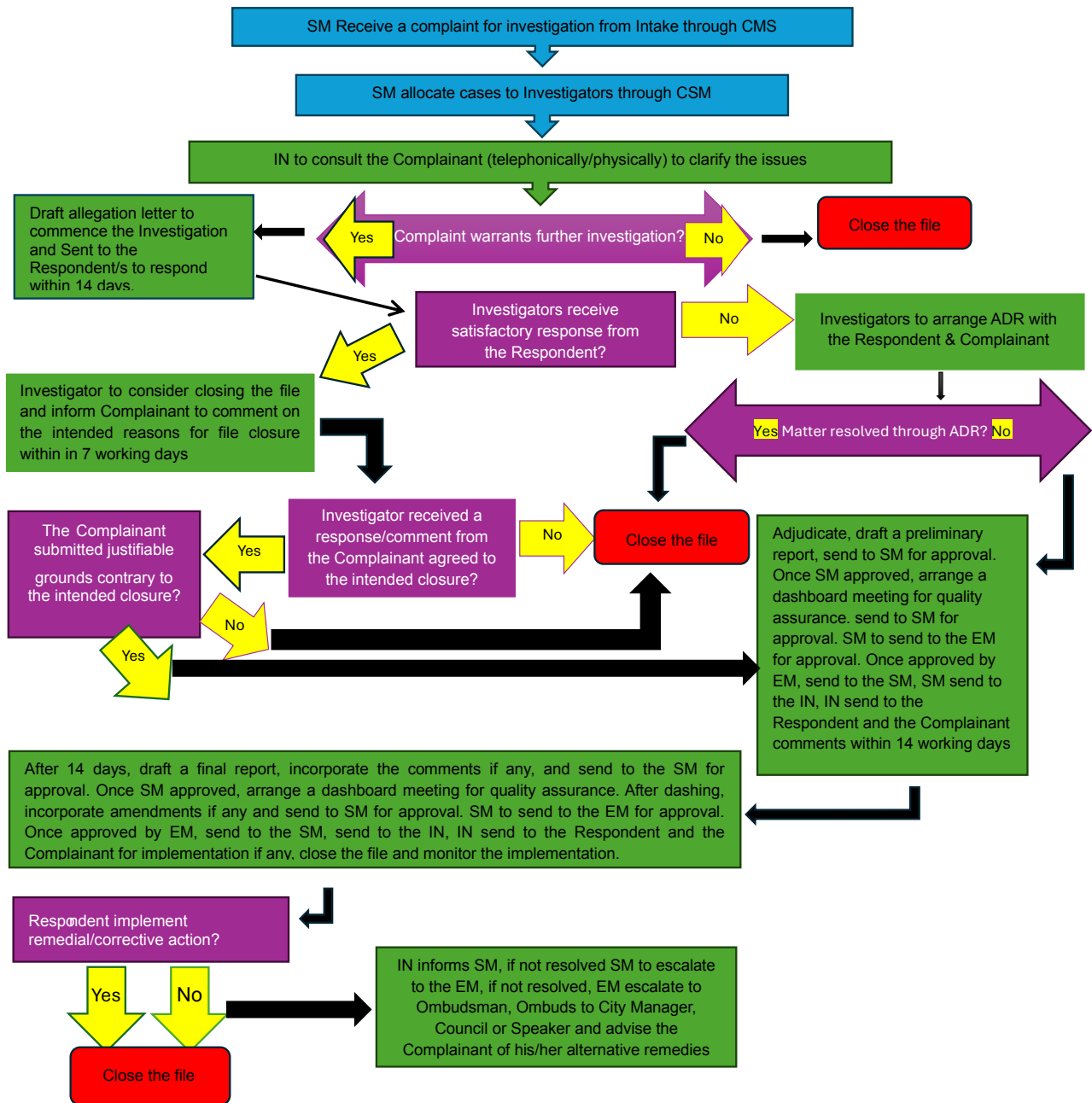
In fulfilling its mandate, the Office not only provides resolution for individual complaints but also strengthens transparency, responsiveness and accountability across the City’s administration.

DEPARTMENT / ENTITY	TOTAL
Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo	3
City Power	147
Development Planning	25
Environmental Health	0
Group HR	1
Group Finance (Rates)	66
Group Finance (Revenue)	468
Johannesburg Social Housing Company (JOSHCO)	2
Joburg Market	0
Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD)	3
Joburg Water	344
Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA)	11
Pikitup	6
Social Development	4
Valuations	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 134</b>

**Table 2: Representation of the voices of residents and where their pain points lie with the specific CoJ departments and entities – Impact side bar (translates to numbers of interventions).**

**Note:** The Office is committed to addressing community concerns with professionalism, impartiality, and fairness by conducting thorough and unbiased investigations. We recognise the importance of timely communication and strive to keep complainants informed at every stage of the process.

# Complaints and Investigation Process Flow





# COMPLAINTS AND INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

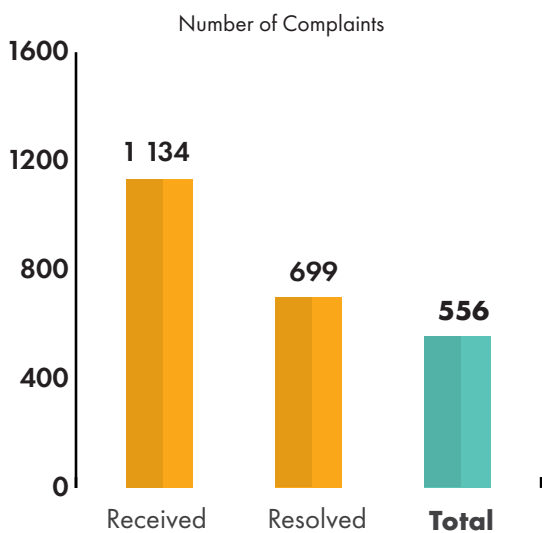
In a city where public services impact the daily lives of millions, accountability and fairness are not simply ideals; they are essential pillars of governance. The Complaints and Investigations Unit plays a critical role in ensuring that the City officials and departments uphold these values, offering residents a reliable channel through which to seek redress and administrative justice.

## Turning the Tide: A Year of Impact

In this financial year marked a period of measurable progress for the Unit. Of the 1 134 complaints accepted for investigation, 859 were resolved, reflecting a strong finalisation rate of 70%, well above the annual target.

In the fourth quarter alone, the Unit achieved an impressive 92,8% finalisation rate for new complaints, exceeding the quarterly target by 42,8%. Furthermore, 249 long-standing cases, many pending for years, were closed – underscoring the unit’s renewed focus on resolution, efficiency and service excellence.

This momentum reflects strategic efforts to streamline processes and leverage technology, all of which have contributed to faster and more effective outcomes for residents.



## Own-instance Investigations

Beyond individual cases, the unit took a proactive stance, initiating investigations into systemic service delivery failures such as prolonged delays in road repairs and unresolved water leaks, without waiting for public complaints to trigger action.

In total, 22 proactive investigations were finalised, bringing long-awaited relief to residents.

This proactive approach, coupled with improved case prioritisation and workflow optimisation contributed to a 61% reduction in backlog cases, decreasing from 406 to 157 by year-end.

What is backlog – carried over cases - Preempt e.g. Christmas lodged complaint but wait for SAP to open and CoJ staff to return from leave.

## Growing Capacity: Investing in People and Partnerships

A key milestone was the appointment of 12 Trainee Investigators, who brought new energy, perspectives and capacity to the unit. To support their integration and enhance overall performance, comprehensive training programmes were implemented, focusing on investigative skills, practical knowledge and procedural competence, laying the groundwork for long-term organisational growth. At the same time and in response to ongoing capacity challenges, the unit began exploring partnerships, with external agencies to access technical expertise and co-design more efficient, technology-driven solutions for complaints management and data tracking.

# IN FOCUS: DRIVEN BY JUSTICE - HOW A NEW INVESTIGATOR HELPED RESOLVE AN OLD PROBLEM IN BRAMFISCHERVILLE



*The matter was not simply about poor infrastructure. It was about dignity, access and a community's right to basic service delivery.*

In Bramfischerville, Phase 4, Soweto, a single road became the symbol of a broader failure in service delivery and ultimately, a testament to the effectiveness of proactive oversight. For years, the residents of Abbess Drive endured worsening conditions: a road eroded by rain, deep potholes that damaged vehicles, and yards that became inaccessible to their owners. Their repeated concerns seemed to disappear into bureaucratic silence.

It was a situation that had gone unaddressed for far too long-until the Office of the Ombudsman intervened.

This case wasn't prompted by a formal complaint. It was initiated by the Ombudsman's own observations and in line with Section 11(1)(a) of the Ombudsman By-Law, 2023, which empowers the Office to launch investigations on its own initiative when public prejudice is evident.

What made this intervention particularly significant was who led it: a trainee investigator, under close supervision, as part of the Office's commitment to building a pipeline of skilled, ethical and community-focused investigators.

From the outset, the case was treated with the same rigour and professionalism as any high-level investigation. On 26 February 2025, the trainee investigator conducted

an *in loco* inspection of Abbess Drive. The findings were clear and concerning: residents couldn't drive into their properties, vehicle damage was common, and the road posed growing safety risks, particularly during the rainy season.

The matter was not simply about poor infrastructure. It was about dignity, access, and a community's right to basic service delivery.

Backed by strong internal mentorship, the trainee was tasked with engaging the Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA). On 19 March 2025, the Office issued a formal letter outlining the allegations. A swift response from JRA acknowledged the issue and confirmed its escalation to the regional depot.

Less than two months later, following sustained engagement by the Office, the JRA reported that repairs had been completed. A follow-up inspection on 23 May 2025 verified that the road had indeed been repaired- and with it, a part of the community's daily life restored.

The outcome of this investigation wasn't just a restored road. It was a restored relationship between a community and the city. For the residents of Abbess Drive, the work meant they could return to their homes without fear of further damage to their vehicles or delays caused by impassable conditions.

For the Office, it marked another example of how proactive investigation, even-led by a trainee, can lead to meaningful change.

For the trainee investigator, this was more than a professional milestone. It was a transformational learning experience. Under the Office's structured development programme, trainees are equipped not only with technical investigative skills, but with a deep understanding of empathy, constitutional values and the human consequences of maladministration.

This case illustrates the dual impact of the Office's work: delivering practical outcomes for residents, while building internal capacity to ensure that future cases are handled with the same diligence and heart. The success of the investigation reinforces the value of mentored, experiential training, proving that even complex systemic issues can be resolved when young professionals are trusted, guided and equipped to act in the public interest.

It is recommended that the matter be formally closed but its legacy lives on in the road repaired, the community heard and the investigator shaped through real-world experience.

## The Power of Collaboration: The War Room

Collaboration has proven critical to the Unit's success. The War Room Committee, led by the City's Chief Operating Officer, has become a powerful platform for cross-departmental problem-solving. This structure brings together key departments and entities to address long-standing service failures and drive accountability.

Through escalation meetings, interventions and conciliation efforts, the unit has been able to accelerate resolutions and ensure City departments respond effectively. In the fourth quarter, 86% of recommendations issued by the unit were implemented – a testament to the impact of this collaborative approach.

### Looking Ahead: Building a Smarter, Faster Response

The year ahead will focus on deepening institutional capacity and continuing to improve service turnaround times. Key priorities include:

- Upgrading the electronic complaints management system to enable real-time tracking and better reporting.
- Expanding staff training and development, with a focus on mediation, data analysis and systems thinking.
- Further reducing the backlog and increasing the Unit's capacity for both reactive and proactive investigations.
- Enhancing collaboration through the War Room, ensuring continued responsiveness across City departments.

By placing fairness, responsiveness and accountability at the centre of its work, the Complaints and Investigations Unit continues to redefine public service delivery and give residents a stronger voice in shaping a better, more just City.



# IN FOCUS: ZONING CONFUSION SPURS OVERSIGHT - A PROPERTY OWNER'S LONG ROAD TO RESOLUTION



*You gave me hope when I had nearly given up. May the Lord bless you and the Office of the Ombudsman for being a voice for the voiceless.*

For \*Dr. James van der Merwe of Eikenhof, land was more than an asset - it was a legacy. But over time, his notarial tied property became a source of financial and administrative strain due to fluctuating zoning categories, separate valuations for each land portion and unexplained rate increases.

After years of unanswered appeals and rising frustration, he turned to the Office of the Ombudsman, alleging that the City had incorrectly zoned and billed his property. He sought fair valuation based on its agricultural use and a consolidated account reflecting its true purpose.

The investigation revealed that the City had delayed responding to his long-standing appeals. The Ombudsman convened a conciliation, where he outlined how the City's approach failed to recognise the property's notarial unity and had led to years of inflated charges.

While the Office could not compel a final ruling, it succeeded in securing condonation for Dr. van der Merwe to present his case before the independent Appeals Board, ensuring his voice would finally be heard.

Though the outcome is still pending, the intervention brought long-overdue attention to systemic billing challenges affecting similar properties, reinforcing the Ombudsman's critical role in ensuring fairness, transparency and access to redress.

\*Not complainant's real name.



## LEGAL SERVICES UNIT

The Legal Services Unit plays a critical role in safeguarding the integrity and accountability of the Office of the Ombudsman. It is responsible for the administration, review and monitoring of all legal contracts and agreements entered into by the Office, ensuring they are executed in a manner that is legally sound, risk-averse and fully compliant with applicable legislation and municipal regulations.

In addition to contract management, the unit provides advisory support on legal matters, including the interpretation of by-laws, regulatory compliance and risk mitigation strategies. This enables the Office to operate within a clearly defined legal framework, especially in cases where investigative outcomes may lead to corrective action, conciliation or potential litigation.

The unit also works closely with internal departments, such as Investigations, Communications and Finance, to ensure that all operational activities are aligned with legal mandates. In doing so, it strengthens institutional governance, supports ethical decision-making and ensures that the Office remains a credible and legally compliant oversight body within the City of Johannesburg.





## MANAGEMENT SUPPORT UNIT

The Management Support Unit serves as the strategic backbone of the Office of the Ombudsman, integrating core functions such as business planning, performance monitoring, human capital development, risk management, compliance, administration and institutional reporting.

In 2024/25, the unit focused on reinforcing systems and processes that ensure the Office remains efficient, accountable and strategically aligned. This included driving a performance culture, ensuring that all planning and reporting obligations - particularly to Council - were met with accuracy, consistency and transparency, in line with the Ombudsman By-Law, 2023.

Through proactive risk management and organisational oversight, the unit enabled the Office to respond to operational challenges with greater agility and foresight. The successful execution of its responsibilities contributed to enhanced governance, institutional resilience and ultimately, improved service delivery to the residents of Johannesburg.

As a central enabler of organisational effectiveness, the Management Support Unit continues to position the Office as a trusted, high-performing oversight institution, responsive to both internal demands and the evolving expectations of the public it serves.

### Key programmes include:

#### Business Planning

This year, the unit took on a pivotal role, bringing the many moving parts of the organisation into a single, coherent direction. It led and consolidated the business planning process, ensuring that every functional and operational plan spoke to two essential pillars: the City's strategic priorities and the Ombudsman By-law, 2023.

Through sustained consultation and collaboration across the Office, it transformed our legislative mandate from words on paper into practical goals, measurable outputs and clear programmes of action. What began as high-level intentions matured into tangible plans that could guide our daily work and long-term vision.

The reporting period reflects a year of discipline and alignment of refining our focus while delivering

in areas central to our mandate. The office's reports moved through the City's governance structures with rigour and transparency, ultimately receiving Council's endorsement.

Anchored by the City's strategic agenda and strengthened by the enabling by-laws, the Office has continued to build internal systems that are both resilient and open. At the same time, the unit enhanced the capacity of the office to fulfil our outward-looking mandate: promoting accountability, safeguarding fairness and deepening public trust.

#### Corporate and Individual Performance

This year, performance management became more than a compliance exercise - it evolved into a disciplined, guiding framework for how the Office measures progress and delivers impact. With rigor and consistency, the unit tracked performance against predetermined objectives and key indicators, ensuring transparency in how the office translates its mandate into action.

On the individual front, the Office fully implemented the City's Individual Performance Management Policy, embedding accountability across all levels. Staff were equipped with the skills to set meaningful targets, understand review processes and navigate the accountability framework. This ongoing work strengthened the alignment between the Office's strategic priorities and the day-to-day contributions of each employee, ensuring that performance was both purposeful and measurable.

#### Risk Management

Throughout the year, the Office adopted a forward-looking approach to risk - anticipating challenges, preparing for them and responding with agility. Both strategic and operational risk registers were developed and implemented, enabling the Office to actively identify, monitor and mitigate risks across all functional areas.

Action plans were not only drafted but tracked closely, allowing risk mitigation efforts to remain relevant and effective. Continuous scanning of the internal and external environment ensured that risk management stayed attuned to shifting realities.

This proactive posture strengthened the Office's resilience, upheld sound governance practices, and protected its credibility and reputation.

## Human Resources Management

Our people remain at the heart of our ability to deliver. During the year, recruitment and selection processes were conducted with full adherence to legislative requirements, including Employment Equity frameworks. Strengthened HR administration, anchored in improved record keeping, supported smoother operations.

The Office continued to cultivate a workforce that reflects the diversity of the city it serves. Investment in employee development remained a priority, with staff accessing relevant training opportunities to expand their skills and advance their careers. Through these efforts, the Office reinforced its commitment to building an inclusive, capable, and empowered team.

## Health and Safety

Creating a safe, compliant workplace was a central focus for the period under review. The Office revisited and updated its health and safety measures, ensuring full alignment with current legislation. Training programmes equipped staff with essential skills in fire safety, evacuation procedures and first aid, fostering a culture of shared responsibility.

These initiatives did more than fulfil regulatory obligations, they helped build an environment where employees feel protected, informed and supported. A safe workplace continues to be the foundation for productivity, well-being and organisational stability.

## Contract Management

The Office strengthened its contract management practices to ensure that every agreement remained valid, current and compliant. Regular monitoring of expenditure against contractual commitments provided assurance that resources were used responsibly and in line with budgetary provisions.

This disciplined approach allowed the Office to secure value for money while maintaining clear oversight of contractual performance - an essential element of effective governance.

## Strategic Reporting

Strategic reporting was consistently prioritised to provide a holistic and integrated view of performance across all functional areas. Reports were produced to ensure accountability to the City Council and stakeholders, while also serving as a mechanism for continuous learning and improvement. Through reliable reporting, the Office demonstrated its ability to deliver

on its mandate, respond to emerging challenges, and sustain the confidence of both the City leadership and the public it serves.

Reliable and integrated reporting remained a cornerstone of accountability throughout the year. Strategic reports provided a comprehensive view of performance across all functional areas, offering clarity to City Council on how the Office delivers on its mandate.

These reports also served as tools for reflection, enabling the Office to learn from experience, adapt to emerging challenges, and continuously improve. Through consistent and credible reporting, the Office strengthened confidence in its work and reaffirmed its commitment to public accountability.

## Statutory Committees

The Office continued to support the effective functioning of statutory committees, reinforcing employee engagement and compliance with labour and governance legislation. Bodies such as the Employment Equity Committee and the Training and Development Committee provided meaningful platforms for employees to contribute to policy implementation and organisational transformation.

Through these committees, staff helped identify initiatives that advance employment equity, track progress toward transformation goals and promote skills development and career growth. Their contributions were vital in deepening inclusivity, fairness and transparency within the Office. These structures not only ensured compliance with statutory obligations but also strengthened a culture of participation and empowerment.



## COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA UNIT

The Communications and Media Unit plays a key role in amplifying the reach and impact of the Ombudsman's work. Through strategic, multi-platform campaigns, the unit not only raises public awareness but also empowers residents with the knowledge they need to access the Office's services, particularly in protecting human rights and accessing basic municipal services.

In 2024/25, the unit ramped up its efforts with a creative and impactful mix of outreach initiatives, ensuring that more residents across Johannesburg understand how and where to seek assistance. From digital engagement to on-the-ground activations, these efforts have significantly strengthened public connection with the Ombudsman's mandate. The highlights of this work are detailed in the sections that follow:

### Outreach Programmes Public Participation and Engagement: Bringing the Ombudsman Closer to the People

In the 2024/25 financial year, the Office of the Ombudsman intensified its efforts to foster an active and engaged citizenry through targeted outreach initiatives. These included Citizen Information Clinics, Open Days and Regional Outreach Programmes, all designed to make the Office's services more accessible, enhance public awareness of residents' rights and strengthen understanding of the City's responsibilities.

A key highlight of the year was the "Here to Hear You" citizen information clinics conducted in February and March 2025. Over a seven-week period, the Office travelled across Johannesburg's seven regions, providing residents with a platform to voice concerns relating to service delivery and human rights violations. During these unannounced visits, the Office observed numerous severe service delivery challenges, including illegal dumping, blocked sewers and unreliable electricity and water supply, affecting thousands of residents living in precarious conditions.

The programme yielded tangible outcomes, with several issues addressed promptly by relevant City departments. Interventions included clearing rubble by Pikitup, repairing dysfunctional streetlights and attending to sewer issues in Region A, among others, with follow-up actions continuing under the Office's supervision. These engagements also highlighted instances where the provision of essential services infringed on residents' fundamental rights to health,

water, sanitation and social security. Observed matters were escalated to the Investigations Unit for formal review and subsequent presentation to Council, ensuring systemic accountability.

Open Days, conducted in partnership with the Revenue Department, provided additional opportunities for residents to engage with the Office directly, follow up on outstanding complaints and gain insight into the Ombudsman's investigative processes.

Through these initiatives, the Office reinforced its role as a trusted intermediary between residents and municipal governance, creating responsive platforms for dialogue and accountability. During the year under review, the outreach team engaged 9 325 residents across all seven regions of Johannesburg, reflecting the Office's growing impact and its commitment to advancing transparent, equitable and citizen-centred service delivery.



## Strategic Media and Advocacy: Amplifying the Ombudsman’s Voice

In addition to its on-the-ground advocacy clinics, the Office implemented a range of strategic communication initiatives to extend its reach and reinforce its mandate. These included public relations campaigns, monthly newsletters, digital media and targeted social media engagement, all aimed at increasing public awareness and improving access to the Office’s services.

By leveraging a diverse mix of media platforms, the Office significantly amplified its public profile. Through the strategic publication of articles, press releases and media interviews, the Ombudsman reached an estimated audience of over 6 million people during the 2024/25 financial year. Media coverage generated an Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) of R1 million, reflecting both the scale and influence of the communications effort.

This sustained media engagement not only strengthened the Office’s brand visibility and credibility but also deepened public understanding of its role in promoting accountability and protecting residents’ rights. By using media as a tool for education and advocacy, the Communications and Media Unit helped position the Office as an accessible, responsive and trusted institution.

The Ombudsman was featured on the following media platforms during the year under review:



PRINT	RADIO
Eldorado Times	Eldos FM
Kempton Express Thembisan	Groot FM
Northcliff Melville Times	Jozi FM
Southern Courier	Power FM
Soweto Urban News	SAFM

**Table 3: Media coverage received**

### A New Digital Era Ahead: Introducing Our Online Complaints Platform

The Office of the Joburg Ombudsman is gearing up to launch a groundbreaking online complaints platform that will transform how Johannesburg residents interact with City services. Launching in the next financial year, this digital innovation promises to make submitting complaints faster, easier and more accessible than ever – at a click of a button.

Imagine reporting issues like billing errors, service delays or unfair treatment in just minutes, anytime and anywhere. Our platform will empower residents to not only submit their complaint effortlessly but also track its progress in real time, giving them full visibility and control throughout the process.

Designed with user experience at its core, the platform will feature seamless registration, secure document uploads and instant confirmation with unique Ombudsman reference numbers to keep everything transparent and accountable. And because accessibility matters, it will be compatible across all devices, ensuring no one is left behind.

Looking ahead, we're committed to making this platform even more inclusive, adding multilingual support, streamlining communication with City departments for faster resolutions and expanding digital literacy programs to reach every community.

Of course, for those who prefer traditional methods, support via email and telephone will remain available, so everyone can access the Ombudsman's services in the way that suits them best.

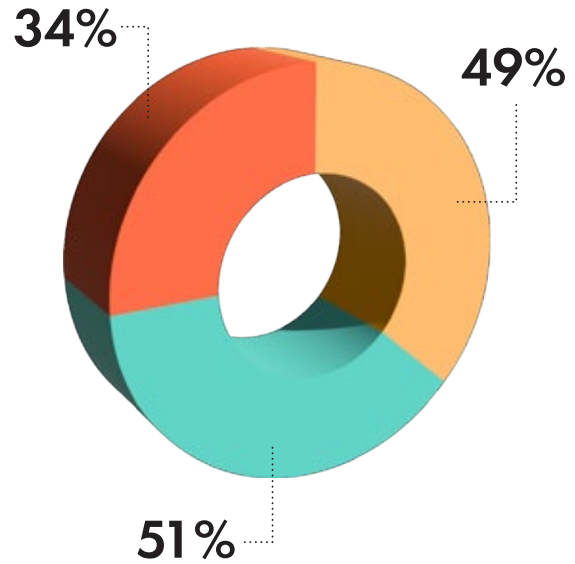
This upcoming platform is more than just technology but a powerful step forward in our mission to champion fairness, transparency and dignity for every resident of Johannesburg.

### Annual Public Awareness Survey: Tracking Reach and Recognition

To deepen our understanding of the communities we serve, the Office undertook a comprehensive awareness survey designed to sharpen ward-level insights, refine our messaging and strengthen our regional visibility. The survey was open to all Johannesburg residents, offering an inclusive platform for voices across the city to shape how the Office communicates and engages.

The instrument, built around 13 carefully crafted questions, explored demographic trends, levels of awareness, service utilisation patterns, preferred communication channels and perceptions of service quality. Although the intended sample size was 2 000, a total of 803 residents participated, providing valuable data that continues to inform our communication planning.

The findings painted a revealing picture: 49% of respondents were aware of the Office of the Ombudsman, while 51% indicated they had no knowledge of the Office or its functions. Encouragingly, 34% expressed interest in receiving ongoing information via email, signalling an appetite for more direct and consistent engagement.



These insights underscored a clear imperative to strengthen our website and social media platforms to ensure easier access, better visibility and more meaningful interaction with the public. The survey has become an important compass, guiding the Office toward more responsive, targeted and accessible communication channels.



## Operational and Financial Performance: Driving Value Amid Constraints

Despite resource limitations, the Office maintained strong operational performance:

- 83% of the operational (OPEX) budget and 92% of the capital (CAPEX) budget were spent, with underspending primarily due to staff turnover 90% of invoices were paid within 30 days, although delays in Group Finance impacted full compliance

**Note:** The unit maintained strict financial controls and compliance measures throughout the year under review; helping the department to ensure that there were no financial irregularities

### Finance Review

The OPEX expenditure as at 30 June 2025 is broken down as follows:

COJ OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN				
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FOR 2024/25 Fourth Quarter ended 30 Jun 2025				
Details	4th Quarter Budget:	4th Quarter Actual:	Variance	% Budget Spent
	Apr – Jun 2025	Apr – Jun 2025		
	R'000	R'000	R'000	%
Employee costs	33 413	27 252	6 161	82
Depreciation	733	360	373	49
Contracted Services	1 317	1 296	21	98
General Expenditure	9345	8 654	691	93
Internal Charges	2 671	1 898	773	71
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47 479</b>	<b>39 460</b>	<b>8 019</b>	<b>83</b>

Table 4: Operational Expenditure (OPEX) for the period of 2024/25

Of the total OPEX budget of R47 000 000, the Office has spent R39 000 000 (83%).

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE FOR PERIOD 2024/25				
ORIGINAL BUDGET	ADJUSTED BUDGET	ACTUAL EXPENDITURE	VARIANCE	% Budget Spent
R'000	R'000	R'000	R'000	R'000
800	350	320	29	92

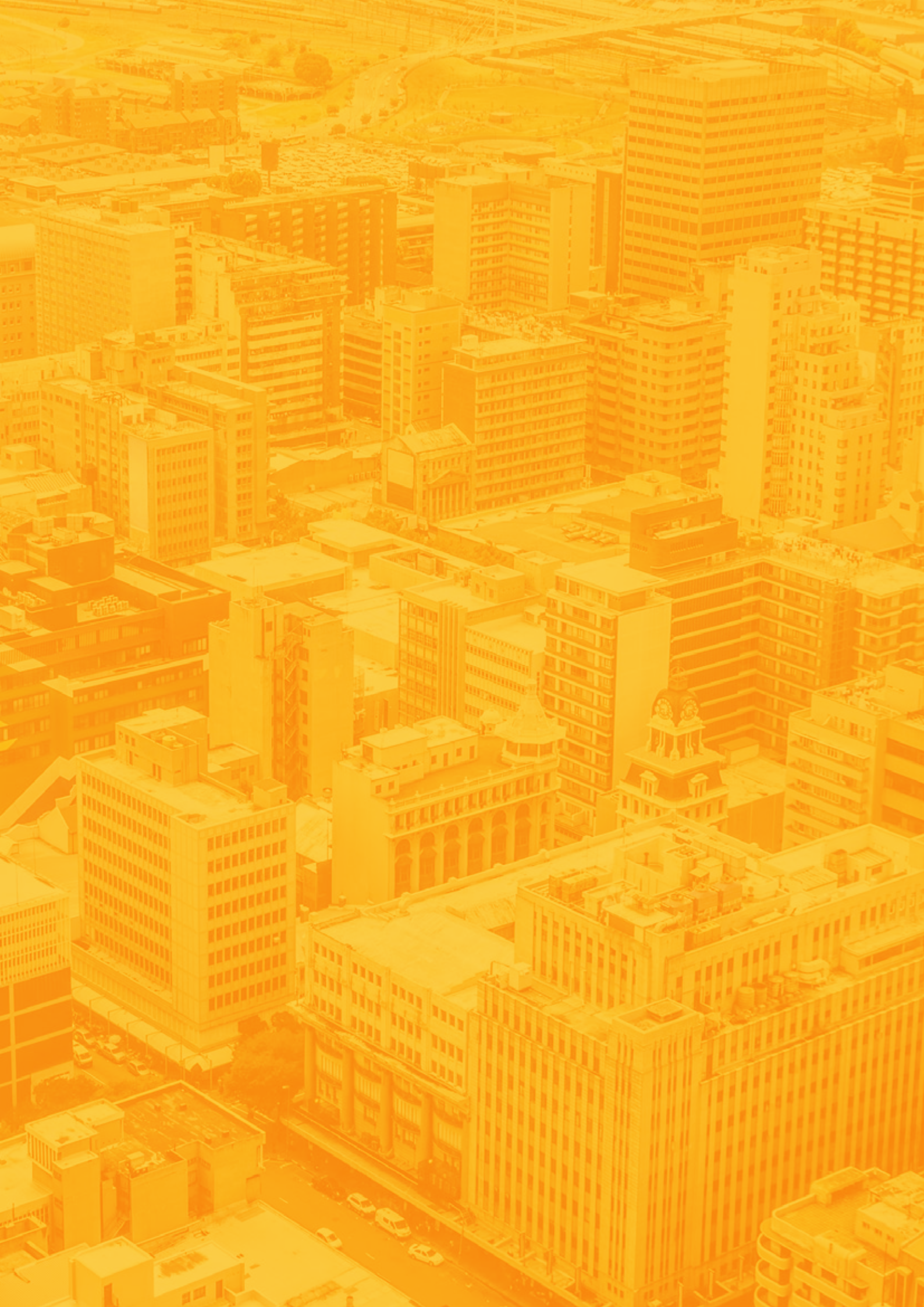
Table 5: Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) for the period of 2024/25

The Office was allocated R800 000 to buy the office furniture in the new office space. The move to the new office space never materialized. The budget was then rebased (cut) to R350 000 during mid-year budget review process. The Office spent R320 000 (92%) of the adjusted budget.

**Note:** The unit maintained stringent financial controls and compliance measures throughout the 2023/24 financial year. Ensuring no financial irregularities.









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