

Comprehensive Comparative Report: Mayor Dirk Kotze's Speech vs. Community Reality in Mossel Bay

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Executive Summary

This report provides a critical, point-by-point comparative analysis of the speech delivered by Mossel Bay Executive Mayor Dirk Kotze at the 12th African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Ethiopia, contrasted against the documented realities and concerns of the Mossel Bay community. The analysis draws upon the Mayor's transcribed speech, multiple uploaded community and legal documents, financial data, and deep research into the Christian community's perspectives and broader municipal governance issues.

The central finding is a profound disconnect between the Mayor's international narrative of "trust, inclusion, and partnership" and the local reality of a community facing an affordability crisis, inadequate public participation, escalating municipal debt, and a breakdown in trust. While the municipality celebrates a "decade of clean audits," the community argues this masks systematic, above-inflation tariff increases and financial vulnerabilities that violate constitutional obligations.

Key Outcomes

What the Mayor Said

Mayor Kotze presented Mossel Bay as a model of collaborative governance, claiming that the municipality has successfully built trust with the community through meaningful engagement, partnerships with civil society (including faith-based leaders), and a track record of accountability evidenced by 12 clean audits in 14 years. He emphasized that trust is earned through affordable, sustainable basic services and inclusive review processes.

What the Community Says

The community, supported by uploaded documents and independent research, strongly disagrees with the Mayor's narrative. Ratepayers, civic associations, and political opposition argue that the municipality's tariff increases are unaffordable and consistently exceed National Treasury guidelines. They contend that public participation mechanisms are legally inadequate and exclusionary. Furthermore, the community views the "clean audit" status as a paradox that fails to measure substantive governance quality, while pointing to a looming financial crisis driven by escalating loan obligations.

Point-by-Point Comparative Analysis

Point 1: Building Trust and Partnerships

Mayor's Claim: "our whole process was built on trust and partnerships... we've really delved in and focused on how we can first build trust with various sectors in our community, and then obviously collaborate from there." [00:55.0 - 01:30.0]

Community Agreement: No

Reasoning: The community documents reveal a significant breakdown in trust. The "Mossel Bay Critical Analysis Report" highlights that the municipality's 15% property rates increase in 2019/20 triggered significant public resistance and calls for boycotts. The Dana Bay Taxpayers Association noted that their letters to the Provincial Treasury regarding compliance were "never presented or dealt with" at Council meetings, indicating a lack of transparent collaboration.

Furthermore, the establishment of **Garden Route First** (GR First) as an independent civic and political movement underscores this loss of trust. GR First was formed specifically to "restore trust, dignity, and excellence in local government" and to promote "transparent, inclusive, independent governance" [1]. The need for such a movement directly contradicts the Mayor's claim that trust and partnerships are already successfully established.

Point 2: Meaningful External Engagement

Mayor's Claim: "we have set out to meaningfully engage internally and also externally... we've created various partnership forums... We've established a faith-based leaders forum..." [01:34.2 - 02:56.0]

Community Agreement: No

Reasoning: While the municipality may have established forums, the community argues that engagement on critical issues like the budget is not meaningful. The "Legal Analysis: Walk-In Meetings" document demonstrates that the municipality's use of 2-hour "walk-in sessions" instead of formal public meetings for a complex R2.36 billion budget is legally inadequate, non-transparent, and fails to provide genuine opportunities for collective deliberation.

The treatment of the **MossRates** civic group further highlights this issue. Instead of engaging with MossRates' substantive governance concerns regarding bulk water security, tariff structures, and infrastructure investment, the municipality responded with a series of eight legal threats, questioning the group's legal standing and refusing their Rule 37 deputation request [2]. This pattern of non-engagement and reliance on legal threats to avoid public participation directly contradicts the Mayor's claims of meaningful external engagement.

Link: <https://eden-movement.co.za/grfirst/index.php?topic=431.0>

Point 3: Affordable and Sustainable Basic Services

Mayor's Claim: "If affordable, sustainable basic services are delivered on a continuous basis to all communities, trust is earned." [04:15.0 - 04:22.5]

Community Agreement: No

Reasoning: This is the most contested point.

The "Comprehensive Financial Analysis Report" and the "Clean Audit Paradox" document prove that Mossel Bay's tariff increases have systematically exceeded both CPI inflation and the National Treasury's 6% guideline.

Over ten years, property rates increased cumulatively by 160.8%, compared to 73.3% CPI inflation. The municipality openly admitted in its 2023/24 and 2024/25 budgets that it could not keep increases within the Treasury limit. The FF Plus Mossel Bay Office formally objected, stating the increases make the town "unaffordable for the middle class taxpayer" and that residents "can no longer afford it."

Link: <https://eden-movement.co.za/grfirst/index.php?topic=408.0>

Point 4: Accountability and Clean Audits

Mayor's Claim: "If accountability can be proven, and in Masaba's [Mossel Bay's] case, we've had 12 clean audits in 14 years, trust is earned." [04:28.4 - 04:35.7]

Community Agreement: No

Reasoning: The community views the clean audits as a "paradox." A clean audit only measures financial statement accuracy and compliance with financial legislation; it does *not* measure whether tariffs are affordable or whether the municipality is fulfilling its constitutional mandate to prioritize community needs.

Furthermore, an analysis of the municipality's **Loans Excel Spreadsheet** reveals a concerning financial trajectory that threatens long-term accountability and sustainability:

- **Escalating Debt:** The accumulated loan balance has grown from R30.8 million in 2018-19 to a projected R775.1 million by 2026-27.
- **Negative Net Exposure:** By 2026-27, the loan balance (R605 million) is projected to exceed total long-term investments (R300 million), resulting in a negative net exposure of R305 million.
- **Soaring Debt Service Costs:** Annual interest payments have increased nearly tenfold, from R5.3 million in 2018-19 to a budgeted R51.7 million in 2026-27.

Link: <https://eden-movement.co.za/grfirst/index.php?topic=430.0>

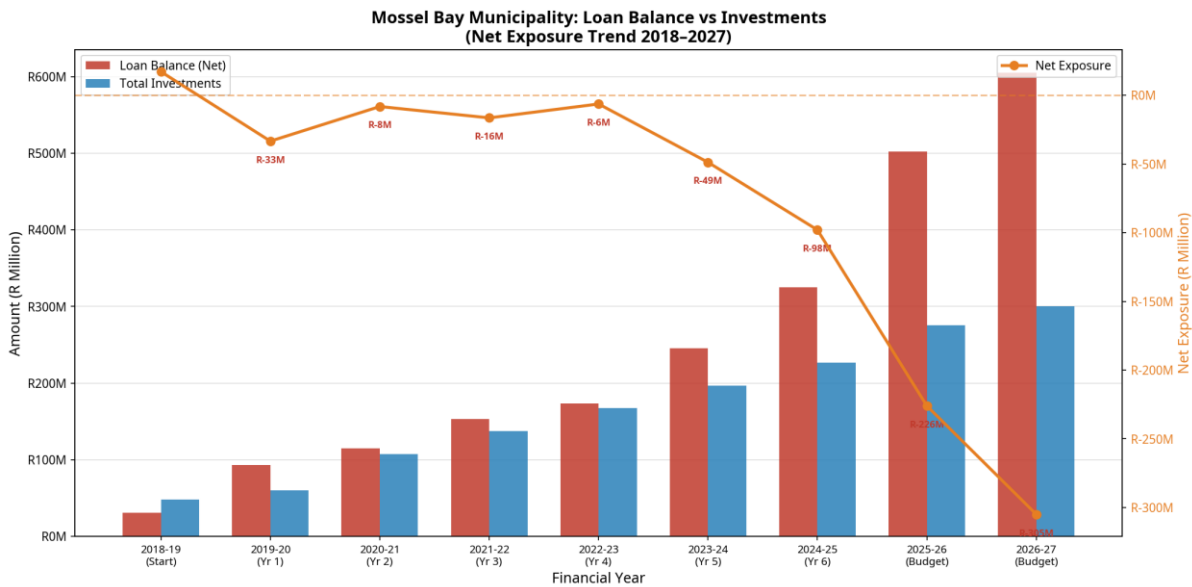


Figure 1:

Mossel Bay Municipality Loan Balance vs Investments (Net Exposure Trend 2018–2027)

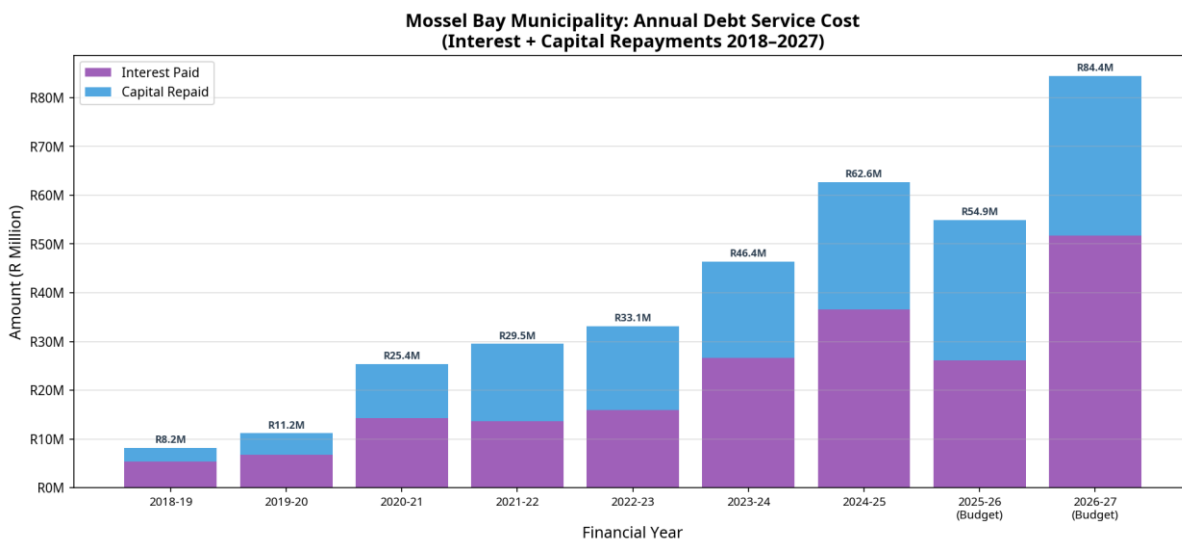


Figure 2:

Mossel Bay Municipality Annual Debt Service Cost (Interest + Capital Repayments 2018–2027)

The community argues that the municipality is using the clean audit as a shield to justify unaffordable tariff increases, which are increasingly being used to service this rapidly growing debt portfolio rather than improving basic services.

Point 5: Communicating Successes and SDG Awareness

Mayor's Claim: "it's important for us to continuously communicate these successes and the partnerships... people will not be unfamiliar with what the leaders are busy with, what they stand for, and what they are trying to achieve for our own communities through that." [04:52.0 - 05:50.8]

Community Agreement: No

Reasoning: The community feels the municipality's communication is inadequate and sometimes misleading. The **MPOA Open Letter to Our Community** (March 5, 2026) highlights the need for residents to independently share critical information about municipal governance, suggesting that

official channels are not providing the full picture [3]. The community's strategic plans indicate a need to actively challenge the municipality's public narrative, showing that residents are not "buying in" to the leadership's vision as the Mayor claims.

Mossel Bay Community on Agenda 2030

A significant point of contention within the Mossel Bay community, particularly among Christian and faith-based groups, is the municipality's enthusiastic adoption of the United Nations Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While Mayor Kotze presented the SDGs as a unifying framework in his Ethiopia speech, the local reality is marked by deep ideological and theological opposition:

- 1 **Agenda 2030 vs. The Word of God:** A detailed biblical critique circulated within the community ("Agenda 2030 vs The Word of God - A Biblical Critique of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals") argues that the UN's agenda fundamentally conflicts with Christian values [4]. The critique suggests that the SDGs promote ideologies contrary to human nature and biblical teachings, leading to significant pushback from conservative residents against the municipality's alignment with these global goals.
- 2 **Pushback Against "Captured" Religious Leaders:** While the municipality actively promotes its "Faith-Based organisations" partnerships to "champion moral regeneration," grassroots community members express deep concerns. There is evidence of residents pushing back against religious leaders who align too closely with the municipality's SDG agenda, accusing them of being "sellouts" or "captured" by the local government, and failing to represent the true struggles and values of the community [5].
- 3 **The Affordability Crisis as a Moral Issue:** For the Christian community, the affordability of basic services is increasingly viewed as a moral and constitutional issue. The systematic above-inflation tariff increases—which the municipality claims are necessary for sustainable development—are seen as disproportionately harming the poor and elderly, contradicting the biblical mandate to care for the vulnerable.

Link: <https://eden-movement.co.za/grfirst/index.php?topic=423.0>

Conclusion

Mayor Dirk Kotze's speech in Ethiopia paints a picture of a municipality thriving on trust, inclusive partnerships, and affordable service delivery aligned with global sustainable development goals. However, the comprehensive evidence from community documents, financial analyses, legal reviews, and independent research tells a starkly different story.

The community of Mossel Bay has lost confidence in the current Municipal Board due to a decade of unaffordable tariff increases, legally questionable public participation processes, escalating municipal debt, and a reliance on "clean audits" that fail to reflect the substantive financial distress

of the ratepayers. Furthermore, the municipality's embrace of UN Agenda 2030 has alienated significant segments of the Christian community, further eroding the trust the Mayor claims to have built.

References

[1] Garden Route First. "Who We Are: A People-Driven Civic and Political Movement for Ethical Local Governance." <https://grfirst.org.za/> [2] Eden Movement Forum. "Who Are MossRates (Click to Read more detail) - Legal Threats 1 to 8 from the Mossel Bay Municipality." <https://eden-movement.co.za/grfirst/index.php?topic=431.0> [3] Eden Movement Forum. "An Open Letter to Our Community - Mossel Bay." <https://eden-movement.co.za/grfirst/index.php?topic=422.0> [4] Eden Movement Forum. "Agenda 2030 vs The Word of God - A Biblical Critique of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals." <https://eden-movement.co.za/grfirst/index.php?topic=423.0> [5] Ward 9 Residents Facebook Group Post: "Ward9 residents pushing back against The Church, Religious leaders..." (June 17, 2025). <https://www.facebook.com/groups/772609736963626/posts/1742232650001325/>