



From the Bitou Junior Town Council to the world

The Bitou Junior Town Council (BTCJ) will have their voices heard as far as the United Nations- thanks to a partnership between the council and the Western Cape Children Commissioner Christina Nomdo.

Ms Nomdo was in Plettenberg Bay this weekend after a partnership was hitched through the Secretary of BJTC, Solakha Noyi, a Child Government Monitor for the Commissioner for Children of the Western Cape.

The partnership led to a two-day workshop to empower children to understand their rights, budget monitoring and more.

Day one was centred around children being rights defenders and the posters they created will be submitted to the United Nations Special Rapporteur.

They also spoke about leadership role models and drew some lessons from Springboks Captain Siya Kolisi and learnt what kind of leader he is and what they can take from his life.

Day two dealt with the branches of government and the division of revenue.

They also dealt with what the municipal budget is, how the municipal budget is determined how they can also lobby for a bigger budget as a structure.

After that, the group had a session on the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and had the Municipal Manager, Mbulelo Memani, give expert advice on how children could influence the IDP.

Mr Memani said he was excited that the children were interested in such.

He said: "The municipality should perhaps look at children as a separate stakeholder at the meetings so that their views can be heard.

Mr Memani said it was provided in the Constitution and the Municipal Systems Act that children cannot be ignored.

He implored the children to make written submissions on the IDP so that their views could find expression in the municipal budget.

Speaking on the two-day workshop, Ms Nomdo, said: “What we're most excited about as the Western Cape Commissioner for children's and this is a formal structure in governance.

“Here, children have been given the opportunity, to interact and engage with the government,” she added.

She commended BTCJ Secretary, Solakha Noyi, for forming the partnership with her office.

Beyond imparting knowledge, she said she learnt something new from the cohort of learners.

“One thing that we affirm them to say is they are the experts in their own lives. So, there's nobody that's an expert at being children in Bitou like the children living in here.”

Meanwhile, Ms Noyi, said the weekend was just an eye-opening journey and experience.

Speaking on the submissions to be made to the UN she said: “We have decided to raise awareness on some of them were the challenges that kids in rural areas face, and that we want the voting age to be decreased to 16 in our country.

“We feel like children should have a say in the governance of our country,” she added.

