MAFUBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

FRANKFORT • VILLIERS • CORNELIA • TWEELING

MAFUBE

INVESTMENT & JOBS SUMMIT

From connection to commitment.

OFFICIAL LAUNCH & ACTIVATION

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by

His Worship the Mayor

Cllr J. P. S. Matsole

Mayor of Mafube Local Municipality

Thursday, 15 October 2026

Villiers Town Hall, Villiers, Free State

MAFUBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MAYOR, CLLR J. P. S. MATSOLE

Launch and Activation of the Mafube Investment & Jobs Summit

Villiers Town Hall | Thursday, 15 October 2026 | Check against delivery

Protocol

Programme Director, Cllr Jonase Kotsi;

Honourable Evelyn Sonto Motaung, Member of Parliament and Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture in the National Assembly;

The Speaker of Mafube Local Municipality, Cllr Mamonaila Tsotetsi;

Secretary General of the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NAFCOC), Mr Richard Zulu;

Cllr Peter Mashiloane, and all Councillors of Mafube Local Municipality present;

Rev Matala Mosikidi, and all our religious leaders;

The Municipal Manager, Senior Management and officials of the Municipality;

Representatives of national and provincial government departments, the Fezile Dabi District Municipality, state-owned entities and development finance institutions;

Business owners, farmers, entrepreneurs, investors, project developers and technical partners;

Traditional leaders, community leaders, and the young people of Mafube;

Members of the media;

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Opening

Dumelang! Sanibonani! Goeie môre! Good morning to you all.

It is a great honour to stand before you here in Villiers this morning as we formally launch and activate the Mafube Investment and Jobs Summit.

Allow me to thank Rev Mosikidi for committing this gathering and its work into God's hands. I thank Cllr Mashiloane for his warm words of welcome, and our Programme Director, Cllr Kotsi, for guiding today's proceedings.

Honourable Motaung, and Mr Zulu of NAFCOC, thank you for travelling to be with us. Your presence sends a clear message to the people of Mafube. It tells them that Parliament and organised business are prepared to stand with a small rural municipality that is serious about its economic future.

To every business owner, farmer, young entrepreneur and community member who took time away from your work to be here: thank you. This summit belongs to you. Without you, it is just another meeting.

Why we are here

Programme Director, the theme of this summit is simple: *From connection to commitment.*

Many of us have attended gatherings where fine speeches were made, hands were shaken, photographs were taken — and very little changed afterwards. This summit has been deliberately designed to be different. It is not a conference. It is a working forum for business, investment and jobs across our four towns: Frankfort, Villiers, Cornelia and Tweeling.

At the centre of it all is one word: **jobs**.

Too many households in Mafube have someone who is willing and able to work, but cannot find work. Too many of our young people finish school with nowhere to go and no clear path ahead of them. Too many talented people leave our towns because opportunity seems to live elsewhere.

According to Census 2022, Mafube is home to 61,150 residents living in 16,896 households. More than a quarter of our people — 26 percent — are under the age of fifteen. Ladies and gentlemen, those children are not a statistic. They are our sons, daughters and grandchildren, and within the next decade they will be looking for work.

The question before us is whether they will find that work here at home, or whether they will have to leave Mafube to find it.

That is why every partnership and every investment we discuss in this process must answer one question: **how does this help the people of Mafube find work and earn a living?**

What Mafube has to build on

Programme Director, we do not start from nothing. Mafube has real foundations, and we should speak about them with confidence.

Our municipality covers almost 4,000 square kilometres of the northern Free State, within the Fezile Dabi District. Our economy is modelled at R4.36 billion a year. That

is a modest share of the district, but it rests on productive land, hard-working people and strategic location.

First, we are an agricultural heartland. Our farms produce grain, soya and livestock, supported by a network of agricultural services. Too much of that produce still leaves Mafube as raw material, and the value — and the jobs — are added somewhere else. Milling, animal feed and packaged foods are opportunities to keep more of that value here at home.

Second, we are well connected. Here in Villiers we sit on the N3 corridor, the main artery between Gauteng and Durban. Our towns are linked by the R26, R34, R103 and R707. Every day, trade and travellers pass through Mafube. Our task is to give more of them a reason to stop, to buy and to invest.

Third, we are blessed with water. The Vaal, the Wilge and the Liebenbergsvlei river systems, and our proximity to the Vaal Dam, support farming, services and a visitor economy that we have not yet fully developed. Water use and tourism projects must, of course, be properly assessed, but the potential is plain to see.

Fourth, we have a basic services platform to build on. According to Census 2022, 94.7 percent of our households have piped water in their dwelling or yard, and 97.4 percent use electricity for lighting. We know there is serious work still to do on reliability, maintenance and refuse removal. But these figures show that the foundation is there, and our job is to make it dependable.

And fifth, we have four towns, each with its own strengths. Frankfort, with its agricultural and agro-processing base. Villiers, our gateway on the N3. Cornelia, with its local enterprise and its eagerness for skills and employment. And Tweeling, with businesses we must retain and grow. One municipality, four towns, one shared future.

What today's launch means

Programme Director, let me be clear about what we are doing today. Today is not the main event. Today is the starting point of the work.

From today until Sunday, 25 October, the Municipality and its partners will run focused sessions, workshops and targeted engagements across Mafube. During these ten days we want to do three things:

- **Connect** with our local businesses, farmers and development stakeholders, and hear directly from them.

- **Identify** the practical constraints holding businesses back, and the real opportunities in front of us.
- **Prepare** project teams to sharpen their proposals, so that they arrive ready to meet the right partners.

Then, on **Monday, 26 October 2026**, we will gather at the **Frankfort Town Hall** for the full working summit. On that day businesses, project owners, funders, technical partners and public institutions will sit in the same room. They will not only talk. They will agree on practical next steps, with names and dates attached.

In other words, ladies and gentlemen, we are not asking you to come to Frankfort to listen. We are asking you to come to Frankfort to work.

How the summit will work

The summit is built around **four working tracks and one process**.

First, Retain. We will address the constraints facing our operating businesses and the jobs they already sustain. Our existing businesses are the foundation of our economy. A job saved is as valuable as a job created, and those businesses deserve a fair opportunity to keep and grow their workforce.

Second, Expand. We will give credible growth plans the partners and the practical preparation they need to move to the next level.

Third, Develop. We will move new proposals forward by clarifying the questions that so often stall them: land, services, permissions, and the steps needed for delivery.

And fourth, Fund. We will connect well-prepared opportunities with the right financing and support mandates.

These conversations will focus on six sectors where Mafube has genuine potential:

1. **Agriculture** — inputs, logistics, access to buyers, and support for both existing and emerging farmers.
2. **Agro-processing** — milling, animal feed and packaged foods that add value to our grain, soya and livestock.
3. **Tourism** — visitor experiences, accommodation and local services built around our rivers, heritage and hospitality.
4. **Manufacturing** — including building materials such as bricks and paving blocks, which our own infrastructure programmes will need.
5. **Construction and infrastructure** — water, sanitation, roads, property and renewable energy, creating work for qualified local contractors.

6. **Mining and aggregates** — sand and gravel, developed responsibly and subject to the necessary environmental assessments and permits.

Honourable Motaung, as a municipality whose economy rests so firmly on agriculture, we especially welcome your support. We look to you, and to the Portfolio Committee, to help us open doors so that our farmers can grow, and so that more of our value chains stay in Mafube.

Mr Zulu, we look to NAFCOC to help us mobilise black-owned and emerging businesses, so that the opportunities of this summit reach the small enterprises and township businesses that need them most.

The Municipality's commitment

Hounarable Speaker, let me speak frankly about our own role.

Investors do not only look at land and markets. They look at whether a municipality works. Dependable water and electricity, regular maintenance, accurate billing, proper land administration and timely approvals all affect the cost and the risk of doing business here.

That is why we say that **municipal competence is part of our economic infrastructure**. A burst pipe that is not fixed, an account that is wrongly billed, or a building plan that waits months for approval — each of these costs a business money, and each of them can cost a worker a job.

So I commit today that Mafube Local Municipality will work on these basics alongside every investment conversation. We cannot ask business to commit to Mafube if we, as the Municipality, are not prepared to commit to doing our own work well. We will listen to your complaints about services not as criticism to be defended, but as information to be acted upon.

I must also be honest with you. Commitments made at a summit do not replace Council, budget, procurement, land-use, regulatory or funding processes. Those decisions will still follow their proper procedures, in line with the law and the principles of good governance. What the summit *will* do is make opportunities clearer, remove obstacles, and make sure the right people are working on them.

What success will look like

Ladies and gentlemen, the value of this summit will not be measured by what we say in this hall, or in Frankfort on the 26th. It will be measured by what happens afterwards — and above all, by whether more people in Mafube are working.

When we leave Frankfort on 26 October, we must have three things in hand:

1. **A clear understanding** of the practical constraints holding back investment and job creation in our four towns.
2. **A list of opportunities** we can develop responsibly, with a clear sense of the local jobs each one can bring.
3. **Actions with named owners and review dates**, so that every commitment has someone accountable for carrying it through.

Commitments need owners. Progress will be measured against work delivered, not promises made on a stage. And we will report back to you, the people of Mafube, on what has been done.

A call to action

Programme Director, I therefore call on every person in this hall to play their part.

To our business owners and farmers: take part in the preparation sessions over the next ten days. Bring your constraints, your growth plans and your ideas. Tell us honestly what is holding you back.

To our young people and job seekers: this summit is about your future. Learn about the sectors we are discussing, and make sure your skills and your ambitions are part of the conversation.

To our project developers: use this time to test your ideas against the hard questions — site, services, permissions, partners and funding — so that you arrive in Frankfort ready to be taken seriously.

To our partners in government, organised business and the funding institutions: we ask you to come not only with goodwill, but with mandates, expertise and a readiness to act.

And to all of you: register your interest on **www.mafubesummit.org**, follow the summit on our digital channels, and encourage others in Frankfort, Villiers, Cornelia and Tweeling to do the same. We will see you at the Frankfort Town Hall on Monday, 26 October.

Declaration and close

Programme Director, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: it is now my privilege and my honour to declare the **Mafube Investment and Jobs Summit officially launched**.

Our future is in our hands. Let us move from connection to commitment — and let us work for it, together.

Ke a leboha. Ngiyabonga. Baie dankie. I thank you.

— Ends —