

ACTis provides risk analysis and early intervention recommendations against state capture and corruption in South African government institutions

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

ACT | ACCOUNTABILITY TRACKER

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Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality

Date issued: 10 August 2026

About the Institution

Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM) is a metropolitan municipality based in East London. The Municipal Manager is the administrative head and accounting officer, and the Executive Mayor is the political head. In 2024/2025, Buffalo City’s total expenditure was R13.07bn.¹

Flag Status

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
								
Improper appointments	Co-opting key functions	Climate of fear or favour	Corrupt awards	Financial malpractice	Obstructing accountability	Manipulating perceptions	Private gain	Shadow network

ISS Analysis

- ACTis has raised five flags for BCMM and placed three under monitoring.
 - Political interference in leadership appointments is destabilising institutional leadership. Compromised appointments enable state-capture dynamics by reducing resistance to irregular procurement, poor financial discipline, and interference in oversight processes.
 - Repeated, costly corruption and maladministration reflect a permissive environment in which irregular practices persist without effective correction. Financial losses have been substantial, driven by procurement failures, tolerated contractor underperformance, and multiple abandoned or failed projects. BCMM has been accused
- of wasting millions on vanity projects while basic essential infrastructure continues to crumble.² This demonstrates weak oversight and accountability, and, in some cases, deliberate obstruction. As a result, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) instituted a Section 154 intervention for BCMM in August 2025.³

 - The Council, its committees, the Mayor and executive committees drive many of these dynamics.
 - The impact on BCMM includes infrastructure and service delivery failure, diminished governance credibility, deteriorating financial stability and long-term administrative problems.



Findings

Flag #1

Improper Appointments



The flag is raised due to political interference in appointments, delays in filling senior posts, and the appointment of a senior executive previously implicated in financial misconduct.

- In July 2025, Mayor Princess Faku dismissed fellow African National Congress (ANC) member Graham Lottering, the Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) for Sport, Recreation and Community Development. Faku immediately replaced Lottering without providing an official explanation.⁴ In a letter dated 30 July 2025, ANC Provincial Secretary Lulama Ngcukayitobi expressed disappointment that Faku had not first consulted the Provincial Executive Committee (PEC). Ngcukayitobi stated that 'the deployment and redeployment of ANC councillors into councils and other strategic areas of deployment are the prerogative of the PEC through its established deployment processes, specifically the provincial deployment committee. [...] Furthermore, you're reminded that the BCMM is under the direct supervision of the PEC and therefore ANC deployees, including yourself, should desist from temptations to tamper with such matters.'⁵ Faku reinstated Lottering in August 2025.⁶
- Faku also came under pressure when some ANC BCMM Council Members tabled a motion of no confidence against her during a virtual special Council meeting on 30 July 2025, citing leadership failures. Lottering seconded the motion, but it ultimately failed.⁷
- An acting Chief Financial Officer (CFO) has held the position since 2022, with Siyabulela Peter serving as acting CFO as of March 2026. The permanently appointed CFO, Ntsikelelo Sigcau, has been on leave since a car crash in 2022. In August 2024, Sigcau said he was able to return to work but claimed he was being sidelined. BCMM claims Sigcau is still incapacitated and that labour processes are underway to resolve the matter.⁸
- In 2019, Vincent Pillay, who was BCMM's CFO at the time, was fired for financial misconduct.
 - In 2013, while he was the Municipality's CFO, Pillay allegedly authorised the misappropriation of R10m to a private company for transporting mourners to Nelson Mandela's funeral. In 2017, a Public Protector report on misconduct surrounding the funeral found that Pillay had violated procurement regulations.⁹
 - Pillay was suspended in February 2018 and dismissed in 2019 following an internal disciplinary hearing that found him guilty of financial misconduct linked to the 2013 funeral. In 2021, he was arrested on fraud charges with 14 others and released on bail; he entered a plea bargain and became a state's witness for the trial.



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Under monitoring

- Pillay was appointed acting CFO after Sigcau's accident in 2022 and was appointed as the BCMM's Chief Operations Officer in 2023.¹⁰

Flag #3

Climate of Fear or Favour



The flag is being monitored due to a lack of consequence management for irregularities.

- Between December 2024 and mid-2026, a report by Ernst & Young (EY) implicating senior officials in irregular procurement for the Mdantsane NU2 swimming pool was withheld from the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) and Parliament's Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA). This has delayed disciplinary proceedings against the implicated officials (see Flag #4: Corrupt Awards and Flag #6: Obstructing Accountability).¹¹

Flag #4

Corrupt Awards



The flag is raised due to a pattern of irregular tender awards and overspending on incomplete infrastructure projects that are abandoned or function poorly.

- In 2024/25, the AGSA flagged irregularities and mismanagement in BCMM's water and sanitation projects, noting that only three of 15 wastewater treatment works are functional, with the rest operating without licences and suffering from design flaws that cause sewage spills.¹²
- In March 2025, SCOPA conducted an oversight visit to Buffalo City to inspect delayed infrastructure projects, assess financial mismanagement, and review problem-ridden public works following briefings from the AGSA and the SIU.¹³
- The oversight visit included a review of the Mdantsane NU2 swimming pool reconstruction project. After decades of decline and neglect, the Olympic-sized swimming pool's refurbishment started in 2017 with an initial budget of R22m. The project ran into delays and burgeoning costs.¹⁴
 - Following significant negative press over the unfinished project, BCMM appointed EY to investigate in late 2024. EY's report, submitted in May 2025, reportedly implicated 23 officials but was not shared (see Flag #3: Climate of Fear or Favour and Flag #6: Obstructing Accountability).¹⁵ The report was finally tabled during a special council meeting in February 2026.¹⁶
 - By March 2025, BCMM had reportedly spent R57m on the project and, in late 2025, approved another R14.5m to complete it, bringing total expenditure to R71m.¹⁷ However, as of August 2026, the pool is not functional because of



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Under monitoring

- poor-quality work, incorrect or missing parts, and the contractor leaving the site before completing the project.¹⁸
 - The EY investigation reportedly found discrepancies in the project's procurement processes. Funds from the pool project had been distributed to more than 60 companies, with at least R13.7m paid to 46 providers unconnected to the project. Investigators also discovered that money had been paid to service providers linked to at least four BCMM officials who had not declared conflicts of interest.¹⁹
 - In February 2026, the SIU reported that the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI) was investigating the project. BCMM's lack of cooperation delayed the SIU's preliminary investigation.²⁰
 - In June 2026, BCMM placed its CFO, Sigcau, and two other senior directors (Luyanda Mbula and Howard Sikweza) under precautionary suspension pending disciplinary action relating to the Mdantsane swimming pool and temporary housing projects during COVID-19. Reports indicate more suspensions, but these have not been confirmed.²¹
- The AGSA audited the BCMM's tourism-focused Water World Fun Park, initially budgeted at R103.1m, which was left unfinished and abandoned in 2023, despite the Municipality spending R125m on the project.
 - The project broke ground in July 2020, launched by then Executive Mayor Xola Pakati.²² The park was supposed to be operational by the end of 2022, but it was abandoned in April 2023 after a dispute with the contractor, Mvusuludzo Projects.²³
 - In 2023, BCMM officials claimed that the project was 95% complete. However, due to a lack of security after it was abandoned, the site was vandalised and subjected to theft. BCMM put security in place six months after the project was abandoned.²⁴
 - BCMM could not claim the R10m performance guarantee from the contractor's insurer, as the insurer was not a registered financial services provider.²⁵
 - The site is in disrepair, and no remedial work has been planned. The SIU has stated that it will motivate for a proclamation to investigate the project.²⁶
- An SIU investigation under Proclamation R23 of 2020 found that, between May and June 2020, the Head of Supply Chain Management at BCMM shared tender specifications with certain service providers before they were advertised, and those service providers were subsequently awarded contracts. The contracts were for three sets of prefabricated mobile structures. According to the SIU, some of the structures were poorly built and did not represent value for money.²⁷



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Under monitoring

- In February 2026, the SIU reported that it intended to register the case at its Special Tribunal. In addition, the SIU made six criminal referrals to the DPCI and the National Prosecuting Authority, and 10 referrals to the BCMM for internal disciplinary action.²⁸
- The SIU shared the report with the Financial Disciplinary Board, which recommended that the BCMM Council act against the officials implicated in the report. However, the implicated officials indicated that they intended to challenge the decision to institute disciplinary procedures, which were paused for review in March 2026.²⁹ Any further updates are unknown.

Flag #5

Financial Malpractice



The flag is raised due to widespread financial challenges and mounting financial distress.

- Annual irregular expenditure for 2023/24 was R1.3bn (12% of total expenditure), of which R1.14bn related to irregularities in contract awards. Accumulated irregular expenditure reached R11.63bn in 2024/25, over 100% of the Municipality's annual budget.³⁰ BCMM wrote off more than R1.6bn in unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure on projects and maintenance incurred over the past three financial years (2021/22 to 2023/24).³¹
- In March 2024, GCR Ratings downgraded BCMM's credit rating to A- for long-term and A2 for short-term credit, maintaining a negative outlook for the year. In March 2026, GCR downgraded BCMM further to BBB+ for long-term credit but maintained the short-term rating of A2; the general outlook was changed from negative to stable.³² Despite these downgrades, BCMM's ratings remain at investment grade, meaning GCR is confident investors will be paid the amounts due to them as required.
- The AGSA identified nine Material Irregularities (MIs) in 2024/25. Three of these involved referrals to other authorities for action, and two are pending a decision on whether the AGSA will invoke its powers to compel appropriate action. The MIs included:
 - Non-compliance with legislative requirements in a wide range of areas, including the use of unwarranted sole source procurements not approved by the accounting officer, procurement processes that did not adhere to the bid specifications, and contract awards to unqualified bidders
 - The lack of useful and reliable key indicators and targets in the performance report
 - Failure to address pollution in the Nahoon and Buffalo Rivers from four different wastewater treatment works



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Under monitoring

- Loss of revenue due to poor rent-collection management of rental properties
 - Failure to prevent irregular expenditure and unauthorised expenditure, with issues identified in prior years not addressed by management and no investigations conducted into those responsible for the irregular expenditure.³³
- In its 2024/25 report, the AGSA expressed uncertainty about BCMM's ability to continue as a going concern. This is mainly due to weak revenue collection, over-expenditure, and liquidity and cash flow constraints.³⁴ The Municipality recorded a deficit of R462.7m in 2023/24, equivalent to 4.3% of that year's total expenditure. The AGSA reported that the National Treasury's oversight of a voluntary financial recovery plan at BCMM had had little impact.³⁵
- In 2024/25, the AGSA identified weak internal controls at the Municipality. The status of oversight in leadership, financial and performance management, and governance was ranked 'poor'. More specifically, weaknesses were identified in policies and procedures, action plans, proper record-keeping, daily and monthly controls, in-year and end-of-year reporting, and the review and monitoring of compliance and risk management.³⁶
- On 28 March 2025, SCOPA reported that during its visit to BCMM, it found consulting engineers had been certifying invoices for payment for construction projects that had not been completed.³⁷
- On 31 March 2025, SCOPA reported that, despite having a recovery programme in place, the Municipality is far from recovering.³⁸
- In August 2025, COGTA deployed a technical support team of 13 experts, including engineers, to BCMM under a Section 154 intervention to strengthen BCMM's capacity to address its administrative challenges, deteriorating financial performance, weak governance, and failures in basic functions and service delivery.³⁹
- In July 2026, the National Treasury gave BCMM access to an annual equitable share allocation grant valued at R1.29bn. The National Treasury initially froze the grant allocation, citing BCMM's continued failure to address irregular, unauthorised, fruitless and wasteful expenditure. However, during a special session convened in July 2026, BCMM demonstrated that corrective actions were in place for historical financial irregularities and that it planned to institute disciplinary action against 100 employees linked to irregular, unauthorised, fruitless and wasteful expenditure.⁴⁰



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Under monitoring

Flag #6

Obstructing Accountability



The flag is raised due to a failure to publish reports, recurring audit findings and reported interference with investigations.

- BCMM has not published its 2024/25 annual report. The Municipal Finance Management Act requires that municipalities publish their annual reports by January of the following year (January 2026 in this case).⁴¹
- The AGSA gave the BCMM a qualified audit opinion in 2024/25, for the third consecutive year.
 - Financial reporting on property, infrastructure, plant and equipment was found to be inaccurate. In 2024/25, the AGSA reported that the Municipality had still not resolved the previous year's property, plant and equipment qualification, as material errors in repairs and maintenance. Similar misstatements persisted despite adjustments and restatements, highlighting weak internal controls and inadequate management oversight.⁴²
- In March 2025, SCOPA, which has a special focus on BCMM due to its documented poor performance, reported that BCMM executives were attempting to avoid accountability.⁴³ SCOPA claimed that the Speaker of the Council, Chief Whip and the Executive Mayor quashed reports of malfeasance on construction projects they visited, such as the Mdantsane NU2 swimming pool construction project and the Water World Fun Park project. They also claimed the executives could not provide convincing reasons for quashing the reports.⁴⁴
- SCOPA also pointed to the slow pace of investigations into irregular procurement and completion delays for projects facilitated by the Municipality.⁴⁵ SCOPA members proposed expanding the SIU's investigation to include additional projects where allegations of irregularities have persisted.⁴⁶
- The SIU claimed that Mayor Faku withheld a forensic report by EY that implicated municipal staff in tender fraud and maladministration. The SIU requested the report in May 2025 and again in October 2025. Despite the Municipality indicating to SCOPA that it had handed over the report, the SIU did not receive a response to its requests for a copy.⁴⁷ When SCOPA had also not received the report from BCMM by March 2026, the Committee requested and received a copy directly from EY.⁴⁸
 - In a meeting with SCOPA, BCMM officials claimed that the City Manager and BCMM legal department had advised them that third parties requiring a copy of the report had to request it directly from EY.⁴⁹
- The Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC) has improved its oversight of BCMM, issuing a report in March 2026 with a detailed review of the challenges facing BCMM. It found that the Council's management lacks effective consequence management and



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corrective measures to address recurring negative audit findings, non-compliance with legislation, and general reputational risks.⁵⁰ MPAC also highlighted that BCMM's management fell short of addressing the root causes of issues identified and providing actionable corrective measures, as requested by MPAC.⁵¹ This followed SCOPA's January 2025 feedback that MPAC needed to improve its oversight of consequence management processes and the recovery of identified lost funds at the BCMM.⁵²

Flag #7

Manipulating Perceptions



The flag is being monitored because documented reports contradict narratives expressed by the BCMM's executive management.

- During her presentation to SCOPA in March 2026, Mayor Faku claimed that BCMM has halted its period of decline, asserting that the Municipality enjoys sound political and administrative governance.⁵³ However, MIs in leases, performance reporting and environmental compliance demonstrate that governance remains weak. The mayor describes the audit turnaround process as steady, yet three consecutive years of qualified audits and unresolved issues in asset registers and financial reporting suggest otherwise.⁵⁴ More specific issues in Mayor Faku's presentation include:
 - BCMM emphasised full transparency and collegial engagement with the AGSA, but the AGSA reported that the Municipality disputed audit findings and delayed responses, contradicting this claim.⁵⁵
 - A zero-tolerance stance on non-compliance was declared, but billions in irregular expenditure remain unresolved, indicating that non-compliance is tolerated in practice.

Flag #8

Private Gain



The flag is being monitored following signs that executive perks have been abused.

- In August 2023, BCMM paid just over R500 000 for a trip to Germany for Mayor Faku and City Manager Mxolisi Yawa as part of Provincial Premier Oscar Mabuyane's delegation. The stated reason for the trips was to strengthen relations between the Eastern Cape and Lower Saxony. However, given the Municipality's low cash reserves, other council members questioned the necessity of these trips.⁵⁶
- Similarly, in August 2024, BCMM spent almost R1m on a trip to China to promote investment, despite being in a serious financial crisis. The trip left the Municipality with



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only R150 000 in cash reserves, forcing the Eastern Cape Provincial Government to intervene in their finances.⁵⁷

- o Mayor Faku and City Manager Yawa were part of a 21-member delegation from the Eastern Cape Province. A breakdown of the trip costs showed that BCMM spent R624 060 on flights, R90 900 on accommodation, R55 380 on ground transport, R57 000 on allowances, and R5 000 on gifts.⁵⁸
- BCMM acting spokesperson justified the trips as part of city development, and told journalists that others had joined the trips to Germany and China, including Noludwe Ncokazi (Head of Local Economic Development), Darby Grounden (Manager of International Relations and Intergovernmental Relations), Mbaso Satyi (General Manager in the Mayor's office), and Amanda Mnyute and Clara Yekiso-Morolong (BCMM Councillors). Questions were raised about whether so many people were required for these trips.⁵⁹

Flag #9

Shadow Network



The flag is raised because an emerging pattern shows a political party and its factions triggering indicators across the flags.

- BCMM appears to be experiencing factional battles within a political party for control of the Municipality. Although the ANC holds a majority on the Council, internal ANC factions have fought for control over executive appointments, including the mayorship. Provincial party interference has intensified this (see Flag #1: Improper Appointments).
- Because of its dominance, the ANC bears some responsibility for the Council's inadequate oversight of the Municipality. This stands out against the severe financial and operational problems BCMM is experiencing and the oversight action being taken by SCOPA, the SIU and AGSA (see Flag #6: Obstructing Accountability).
- The politically appointed executive, including Mayor Faku, also bears responsibility for creating potentially misleading perceptions of the Municipality's true state and reportedly withholding information from an investigation aimed at uncovering potential fraud and maladministration (see Flag #6: Obstructing Accountability and Flag #7: Manipulating Perceptions).



Flag raised



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Recommended Actions

	DUTY BEARER	ACTION(S)	ASSOCIATED FLAGS
1.	Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality Mayor and Municipal Manager	- Prioritise filling all vacant senior posts. - Introduce new measures to strengthen rent collection from rental properties. - Publish the 2024/25 Annual Report.	Flag #1: Improper Appointments Flag #5: Financial Malpractice Flag #6: Obstructing Accountability
2.	Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality Council	Demand a progress report on disciplinary action taken against those implicated in irregular and corrupt awards, especially relating to infrastructure projects, such as the Mdantsane NU2 swimming pool project and the Water World Fun Park.	Flag #4: Corrupt awards Flag #5: Financial Malpractice Flag #6: Obstructing Accountability
3.	National Treasury	- Revisit the effectiveness of the voluntary financial recovery plan for BCMM and monitor the Municipality's commitments regarding the release of the R1.29bn equitable share allocation. - Provide technical assistance for strengthening the capacity of public financial management at BCMM.	Flag #5: Financial Malpractice
4.	Standing Committee on Public Accounts	- Demand a list of all senior officials suspended and appearing before hearings. - Challenge the BCMM Mayor on her statements about the true state of the Municipality's operational and financial health, and how or why they do not align with the findings of the AGSA.	Flag #4: Corrupt awards Flag #5: Financial Malpractice Flag #6: Obstructing Accountability Flag #7: Manipulating Perceptions
5.	Municipal Public Accounts Committee	Demand quarterly progress reports on disciplinary action arising from AGSA, SIU and forensic investigations.	Flag #4: Corrupt awards



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		- Conduct oversight hearings on the Mdantsane NU2 Swimming Pool and Water World Fun Park projects. - Track implementation of corrective actions relating to the MPAC Report issued in the first quarter of 2026, and request reporting (with reasons) for any failures to implement these corrective actions. - Require progress reports on the implementation of the Section 154 intervention and the Municipality's commitments regarding the release of the R1.29bn equitable share allocation.	Flag #5: Financial Malpractice Flag #6: Obstructing Accountability
6.	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs	- Issue formal directives for BCMM to implement all outstanding SCOPA recommendations by a set deadline. - Require the Municipality to submit all outstanding forensic, audit and investigation reports to SCOPA, SIU and AGSA. - Mandate regular monitoring and reporting on the implementation of audit action plans and consequence management. - Introduce safeguards to prevent political interference in appointments and enforce stricter oversight of recruitment and acting roles. - Insist that the Municipality fills vacant senior posts as a priority.	Flag #1: Improper Appointments Flag #5: Financial Malpractice
7.	Auditor-General of South Africa	Publish the BCMM's audit report for 2024/25.	Flag #4: Corrupt awards Flag #5: Financial Malpractice
8.	Civil society	Monitor leadership dynamics for signs of political interference in BCMM's administration and governance.	Flag #4: Corrupt awards Flag #5: Financial Malpractice



Flag raised



Flag lowered



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			Flag #6: Obstructing Accountability
			Flag #7: Manipulating Perceptions



Flag raised



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The 9 Flags

Flag #1

Improper Appointments

Improper appointments, dismissals or failure to remove individuals in senior positions may be used to drive a corrupt agenda.

Flag #2

Co-opting Key Functions

Informal control may be established over critical functions within the institution to abuse them.

Flag #3

Climate of Fear or Favour

The working culture favours loyalty over duty; alignment with a corrupt agenda is rewarded, and resistance is punished.

Flag #4

Corrupt Awards

Contracts, licences, partnerships, loans and/or investments may be awarded irregularly and repeatedly benefit the same actors.

Flag #5

Financial Malpractice

The institution's financial management practices may be abused to advance a corrupt agenda.

Flag #6

Obstructing Accountability

The institution's internal operations might be deliberately obscured to hide potential misconduct.

Flag #7

Manipulating Perceptions

A public narrative that frames misconduct as innocence may be promoted.

Flag #8

Private Gain

Illicit gains may be distributed to benefit the same actors.

Flag #9

Shadow Network

The same public and private actors may collude to gain control over an institution's assets and functions, benefiting repeatedly.

About ACTis

What is ACTis?

The Anti-Corruption Tracker Information System is an initiative of the Anti-Corruption and Accountability Project at the Institute for Security Studies. It provides analysis on corruption and state capture in South Africa, to inform early intervention and enforcement. It utilises a system of indicators and an AI-driven data-collection and analysis tool, validated by human experts. It identifies risks within individual government institutions and produces actionable recommendations to address them, with a view to disrupting patterns of state capture and corruption.

Findings are shared directly with government and other duty-bearers, civil society organisations, the media and the public, empowering authorities to intervene, strengthening accountability, and enabling citizens activism.

Links to ACTis Information:

Further project information may be found at the following links:

[Terms and Definitions](#)

[Project Methodology and Analytical Framework](#)

[About the Anti-Corruption and Accountability project](#)

[About the Institute for Security Studies](#)

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