

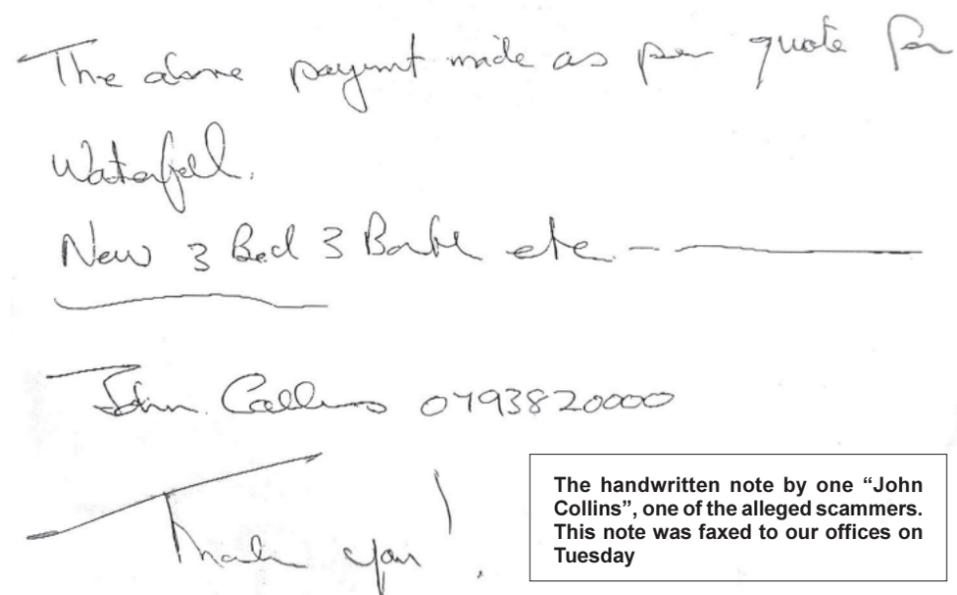
Thousands lost in rental scam

Continued from p 1
The advert, which stated: "New 3 bedr, 3 bathr townhouse with garden + D/lock-up garage, Avail immediately for R5000 pm (neg). Tel 079-382-0000", was placed by a person by the name of "John Collins" who paid the advert by means of a cash deposit at the Davenport branch of First National Bank in Durban on Tuesday last week.

When the newspaper appeared on Thursday, Cindy Jonker was one of a large number of people who responded to the advert and called the number provided. Cindy and her husband were urgently looking for accommodation as the lease

Majola. Bianca decided to first pay the security deposit of R5 000 and only pay the month's rent at the beginning of April. However, she too became highly suspicious when she encountered other prospective tenants at the property, after she had already paid the deposit.

According to Bianca, at least ten other people had already signed the visitor's register when she went to look at the property at Monterey on Thursday last week, raising the probability that many more were caught in the scam. When Bianca arrived home, she immediately looked up the name of the firm of attorneys, but soon realised that there was no such firm. It was then that



The handwritten note by one "John Collins", one of the alleged scammers. This note was faxed to our offices on Tuesday

on their current place of residence expired at the end of March. According to Cindy, she had previously approached all the rental agencies in Rustenburg to try and find accommodation to rent, but to no avail. She claims that none of these agencies returned her calls and she therefore had no choice but to try and find accommodation privately.

When Cindy responded to the advert, she spoke to an English speaking person who introduced himself as "Deon Venter" who told her that the advertised property was located in an upmarket residential complex near the Waterfall Mall. He then proceeded to inform her that she had to forward a copy of her identity document to his attorneys so that a credit check could be done. He later sent her a text message on her cellular phone, informing her that in order to "secure unit nr 11 Monterey Matsukuwyane st Waterval Rustenburg for rental", she had to pay the security deposit plus one month's rent in advance into the bank account of his attorneys, Lamont, Khan and Mbhele and to fax proof of payment to a number in Durban. The rental agreement could then be drawn up. In good faith, Cindy promptly deposited the amount of R10 000 into the FNB account held by a certain BP Mbhele and faxed the deposit slip to the number provided. "Deon" later informed her that she could obtain the key to the property from a security guard at the gate of the complex. He also gave her the correct name of the guard in question.

However, when Cindy and her husband went to inspect the property she was rather taken aback to find another prospective tenant also inspecting the property after she had already paid the deposit. This person was Bianca Fourie, who also responded to the above-mentioned advert. She also spoke to a person by the name of "Deon" who told her to pay the deposit as soon as possible to secure the property. However, in her instance, she received a text message informing her to pay the security deposit into the bank account of another firm of attorneys, Rautenbach, Strauss and Majola. This account was at ABSA, held by one NF

the reality dawned on her that she had been defrauded. She went to the local branch of ABSA and explained the situation. There she was told that the bank could do nothing until they received a police docket number. She did however learn that several thousands of rands had already gone through that particular account on Thursday, but almost all the funds had already been withdrawn.

Meanwhile, on Friday Cindy called "Deon" again to enquire when she could get the keys in order to start moving some pieces of furniture into their new home. However, this time another person answered the phone after it rang for an extended period of time. This person introduced himself as "Rueben" and told her that they would be in Rustenburg over the weekend, when they would sign the contract and hand her the keys. By now Cindy had already realised that all was not well and she had already made contact with the real owner of the property, Mr Marius Oosthuizen, who was unaware of what had been going on. When Cindy approached the local branch of FNB, she was also told that several thousands of rands had already gone through the account in the previous two days. However, in this instance, the bank immediately froze the account pending further investigation.

It was subsequently discovered that the Durban phone numbers provided by the alleged scammers are actually the numbers of Nedbank's customer care line. Questions that still remain unanswered are among others, where the scammers got the information regarding the vacant property in Rustenburg; where they managed to find the keys and who handed the keys to the security guards at the complex.

* Meanwhile, members of the public are warned to be extremely careful when responding to adverts and to make absolutely certain that they obtain the proper credentials of those offering goods and services before handing over their hard-earned cash. This comes after yet another person was allegedly defrauded of a substantial amount of money this week after responding to an advert that offered the services of a handyman.



Belastingbetalers/Ratepayers

Vervolg van p 1
waar is die mense wat ons saans by ons huise bel omdat hulle so uiters bekommerd is? Waar is hulle nou dat ons 'n amptelike forum met 'n mandaat van ons mense het om met ons plaaslike regeringstrukture te praat?"

Maar daar was ook klagtes uit eie geledere en geleentheid vir die belastingbetalers om hand in eie boesem te steek. Klagtes dat lede van die Belastingbetalersvereniging se interim-komitee wat trouens, by dié geleentheid óf gewysig óf gefinaliseer sou word, sonder verskoning afwesig was. Daar is bespiegel oor die moontlikheid dat dié lede sonder kennisgewing van die bestuur "verskoon" sou word. As 'n mens sommer die tweede vergadering al sonder verskoning misloop, kan jy dit onmoontlik tog nie erns met die belastingbetalers hê nie", is aan die Herout gesê.

Maar die interim-komitee en die karige aantal ondersteuners in die pawiljoen wat by tye meer na 'n plaasvendusie gelyk het, het hulle nie van stryk laat bring nie. Op gepaste wyse is 'n leraar vorentoe geroep om met skriflesing en gebed te open. Uit Gen 1: 26 - 28 is die Kultuuroopdragte voorgehou - die opdrag om jou mense en gemeenskappe behoorlik te bestuur en in stand te hou - presies dit wat die taak van die Belastingbetalers sou wees, maar helaas - met weinig ondersteuning van die mense sonder wie dit nie moontlik sou wees nie.

Later het omgekeerde omies opgespring, vingers in die lug geswaai, sommer met 'n paar "knope" tussenin laat waai en niemand hoegenaamd selfs net effens onseker oor hul frustrasie met die Rustenburgse Munisipaliteit gelaat nie. Sommige is met moeite tot bedaring gepaai. Maar in die agterbanke (en met respek gesê) het dinamiese ondersteuning met bewese invloed en aansien ongelukkig ontbreek...

Maar nee, vir die Belastingbetalersvereniging is dit nog lank nie verby nie. Hoogstens dalk, wag daar nou eers die taak om Rustenburgers opnuut daarop te wys hoe belangrik 'n lewenskragtige Belastingbetalersvereniging vir die Platinastad is, hoe dié vereniging hierdie ideaal gaan bereik en hoe dit vorentoe gehandhaaf kan word. "Ons is dit aan ons betastingbetalers, onself verskuldig..."

After indeed quite a number of important successes in only its second/third month, the Rustenburg Ratepayers Association can indeed look forward to a future of improvement in many areas. There is much hope following a recent, satisfactory meeting with Mr Andries Boshoff, Municipal Manager of the Rustenburg Municipality. A full programme with several actions to the benefit of the entire Rustenburg community and especially our loyal ratepayers, was immediately introduced and rolled out.

More information on the Rustenburg Ratepayers, its goals and the implementation thereof will be published in Rustenburg Herald shortly. Meanwhile, prospective members are advised to join as a matter of urgency. Membership fees are only R60 per annum and only R30 renewal per year for existing members. For more information contact the Chairman - Mr Johan Schoeman at 082-455-7539 or the Secretary, Mr Johan de Klerk at 082-891-3912.

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