

Traders angry over tender

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ACCUSATIONS that traders at the Church Walk fleamarket were not informed of the decision to put the market out to tender have been angrily rebutted by the eThekweni Municipality. eThekweni's Head of Markets, Shunnon Tulsiram, denied the accusations made by the traders last week.

He said: "Traders have been notified that the market was indeed up for tender and that the traders were allowed to put forward an application for tender to run the market.

"They would have an advantage against the other applicants, as they have been trading in that particular market for many years, but to date have not put forth an application for tender," he said.

However, the traders, who staged a protest at the Durban Market in Clairwood last week, claim they were never told of the tender until they saw a newspaper

advert: "We were not even consulted on the matter," said Athi Nadesan, Church Walk fleamarket Union secretary.

"The market, along with two other markets in the city, are being put up for tender. We are looking for a private operator to run the market, who would then lease the market out to individual traders," said Tulsiram.

Traders say that they have operated in the market for several years and that council's decision to allow applicants to bid for the tender of the market will take away whatever little they currently earn.

Tulsiram said that the traders' decision not to pay rent for the past three years was possibly one of the reasons that the market's operation was put up for tender.

Traders decided not to pay rent in a bid to get the council to charge lower rates.

"We have been pushed around for the past six years from one department to another. We have had no firm resolution with

regard to our rentals and the running of the market, yet we have presented our proposals to city officials at numerous meetings," said chairman of the Church Walk Fleamarket Traders' Union, Yunus Naby.

At the protest the traders chanted "No tender!" and placard signs reading: "Council is robbing us of our butter and bread."

Rentals

"The high rentals in the market is making it impossible for us to earn a living, let alone support our families," said angry trader Sameera Rasool.

Margaret Ornellas, a clothing trader for 11 years, said: "We have been paying a rental of R860 a month and have appealed to the council since 1998 to lower the rental to R125 a month, but have not had a response."

In a letter written to the head of markets last year, the union appealed to the council to write off the arrears based on the decline of sales by more than 50% due to the

influx of cheap Chinese imports brought into the city; illegal traders who sell products without paying a rental; no tables received from council; no proper toilet facilities for traders; inefficient security and supervision for traders and the high cost of transporting goods to and from the market due to the high cost in fuel.

Naby said: "The market at present is experiencing its worst decline in business, and if council put it out to tender, many traders and their employees, together with their families, which they support, will be out of jobs as rentals charged by private markets are exorbitant.

"We strongly feel that council's policy of dumping poor traders into private markets where traders make a little or no profit is not in line with central government policy of uplifting small business people," said Naby.

Tulsiram said that traders who continued not to pay rental would not be allowed to continue their business in Church Walk.