

■ LAWSUIT

Corporate lawyer steps into breach for homeless

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FOLLOWING its policy of fining street people, the City of Cape Town is now facing a lawsuit brought by seven homeless people.

The controversial fines caused an outcry after they were issued to people for sleeping in public in winter.

When the matter first hit the headlines, the Community Chest, a philanthropic body whose main purpose is to alleviate poverty, held discussions with key stakeholders, including the SA Human Rights Commission.

One of those who attended the meeting was lawyer Lucien Lewin, who usually acts for corporates, but felt so moved he agreed to take on this case.

Lewin, who is with the firm Dingley Marshall, said yesterday he brought the lawsuit because he was “trying to give voiceless people a voice”.

All seven plaintiffs: Carin Gelderbloem, Emily Smith, Vuyo Mbozi, Beulah Meyer, Natasha Persent, Xolani Siboxo and Patricia Geyser are described as homeless and living in the Cape Town CBD.

Political parties and social justice groups yesterday commented on the lawsuit filed in the Western Cape High Court on Thursday.

They condemned the city’s actions as “immoral, cruel and inhumane”.

Brett Herron, a former Cape Town Mayco member for transport, now representing the opposition Good Party in the legislature, said: “The fining of

homeless people is an act of extreme cruelty and inhumanity. This cruelty is compounded when law enforcement officers confiscate the meagre belongings of the homeless people.”

Fadiel Adams, of Gatvol Capetonians, said: “We support the lawsuit fully. The City of Cape Town is well aware of the poverty, but it sues people for being homeless.”