



MAKANA

MUNICIPALITY | EASTERN CAPE

MASIPALA WASEMPUMAKOLONI

MUNISIPALITEIT | OOS-KAAP

...a great place to be

*COMMUNICATIONS
POLICY*

FOR

*MAKANA
MUNICIPALITY*

2016/2017

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1. PREFACE

During the apartheid era there was hardly any communication between the government and the people it served, decisions were formulated and imposed to the community without consulting them. Then, the establishment of a democratic Government in 1994 brought a new environment and system of governance underpinned by a different philosophy in South Africa. This historic development posed and continues to place a complex and demanding responsibility on the shoulders of Government in many fronts, if not all.

As an integral component of Government, Makana Municipality is not left unscathed by the abovementioned challenge as it is charged with a mandate to meet and fulfill its responsibilities in this regard. In terms of the Constitution, local government is a developmental sphere of government in its own right and no longer a function of national and provincial government. Local government has also been given a distinctive status and role in building democracy and promoting socio-economic development.

The Ministry for Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development embarked on a policy process that would give effect to this new vision of local government. An intensive 18-month period of consultation and research culminated in the White Paper on Local Government. This White Paper spells out the framework and programme in terms of which the existing local government system will be radically transformed. It establishes the basis for a system of “developmental local government” which is centrally concerned with working with local citizens and communities to find sustainable ways to meet their needs and improve the quality of their lives. The definition of developmental local government as contained in Section B on page 17 of the White Paper on Local Government says

“Developmental Local Government is local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives.”

Communication is a fundamental part of the Municipality and the promotion of dialogue and interaction between the Municipality and its citizens contributes to success of the institution. In this context, dialogue means a two-way interaction and sharing of information between equal parties. Through communication, relationships with citizens and major stakeholders are nurtured; thereby improving the understanding of community needs and enabling the Municipality to deliver effectively.

Furthermore the President of the Republic of South Africa introduced a Back to Basics concept that focuses on five pillars, they are:

1. Putting people and their concerns first;
2. Supporting the delivery of municipal services to the right quality and standard;
3. Promoting good governance, transparency and accountability;
4. Ensuring sound financial management and accounting; and
5. Building institutional resilience and administrative capability.

2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The objectives of the **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (Act 108 of 1996)**, require all Government Institutions to observe the following: -

All Government Institutions including Makana Municipality, must observe and adhere to the principles and foundational values of the Constitution and the relevant applicable legislation.

Likewise, the **Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (Act 3 of 2000)** and **Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act 2 of 2000)** charge Government

sectors to observe and adhere to the principles and practices of good governance.

By implication, Makana Municipality must ensure that its operations and functions are responsive to the overall thrust and provisions of the existing legislation that govern its interaction with the different categories of stakeholders be it internal or external.

It is within this context that this policy shall direct Makana Municipality on how to constructively engage the members of the public, external bodies and in particular media institutions as instructed by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and applicable legislations and the institutional policies.

The Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000), equally, states that all Municipalities must strive to meet the following objectives, among others: -

To provide core principles, mechanisms and processes that are necessary to enable Municipalities to move progressively towards the socio economic development of local communities;

To ensure access to essential services that are affordable to all;

To ensure sound application of cooperative governance principles and practices;

To foster meaningful dialogue and interface within the internal structures of the Municipalities on the one hand, and between the Municipalities and external bodies and members of the public on the other;

To establish a simple and enabling framework for the core processes of planning, performance management, resource mobilization and organizational change which underpin the notion of developmental local government;

To provide a framework for local public administration and human resource development;

To ensure that the Municipality put in place service tariffs and credit control policies that take their needs into account by providing a framework for the provision of services, service delivery agreements and Municipal Service Districts.

3. PRINCIPLES CENTRAL TO COMMUNICATION POLICY

The first principle is ensuring “**governance**”. In terms of the national definition of “governance”, Makana Municipality is required to govern with, rather than for people, viewing the Municipality as a facilitating body and not a governing body. For this to be achieved dialogue between Municipality and citizens through ward committees and collective decision-making must be promoted and enabled. This requires the strengthening of the link between Council, ward committees and the community.

The second principle of “**participation**” requires both Municipality and citizens to be actively involved in and contribute to the affairs of Makana. Through dialogue, citizens and Municipality will be able to share expertise, experience and information and contribute to the creation of an interactive local authority. In this interaction, both parties are considered equal. The Municipality should endeavour to enable participation wherever possible and avail itself and its personnel to engage in discussions with citizens.

“**Citizenship**”, being the third principle, allows for a broad definition of role-players and stakeholders. The term includes the internal (i.e. Councillors, personnel and municipal trade unions) and external public (i.e individuals, organisations and business forums operating outside Municipality e.g. ward

committees, delegations, VIP's, etc.). This policy should enable the administration and Council to interact with all role-players in an efficient and effective manner, focusing greatly on Pillar 1 of Back to Basic – Putting people and their concerns first.

The fourth principle refers to the manner in which communication occurs. It is envisaged that communication involvement and interaction becomes a “**culture**” within the Municipality. In this context “culture” means that the necessity and importance of communication is recognised and is an integral part of the municipality's operations. With the acceptance of the need for involvement, the value and importance of communication is appreciated and understood by all role-players. This culture cannot be enforced; it develops and evolves within the organisation and its personnel.

The last principle being “**public image**” is an important factor for successful communication. Image refers to the public perception of the Municipality and may either attract or deter citizen's involvement and participation. Research shows that a favourable public image promotes participation. However, it must be noted that in this policy, it is anticipated that the municipality's image will be improved through communication.

4. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

To set a guiding policy framework for Makana Municipality in discharging its responsibilities and;

To clearly outline the institutional arrangements and existing channels of communication within Makana Municipality and the accessibility of information to the community members, internal staff and government sectors.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

To encourage a culture of community participation in governance and to improve Council's public image, the concept of governance requires Council to be more transparent and democratic. Effective communication is an essential component of governance, therefore it is critical that the Municipality improves its communication efforts. In so doing, consideration must be given to two concepts enabling governance, namely availability of information and accessibility of the organisation.

To meet the objectives of the Constitution and various legislations and policies applicable to Makana Municipality;

To foster meaningful dialogue and interface between and among the internal role players within Makana Municipality; the Municipality should achieve effective community involvement in municipal affairs, it is essential that communities are provided with necessary information. Without this, Council cannot expect communities to become involved and provide a meaningful contribution. The active provision of information to communities and personnel will encourage Council to be accountable for its actions.

To enhance and promote cooperative governance and constructive engagement between Makana Municipality and outside bodies and individual members of the public and; Council would like to create an environment whereby the process of governance (which is translated into programmes and services offered by the organisation) is accessible and available to all citizens of Makana. To accomplish this, Council should eliminate barriers currently preventing access to the decision-making process, the administration and role-players. Barriers exist in many forms and include entrenched procedures, policies and even attitudes of personnel. In accordance with the concept of governance, Council intends

improving the decision-making process by making it more accessible. Improved accessibility will encourage interaction; contributing to improved understanding and informed decision-making.

To ensure effective coordinated and coherent system of communications within Makana Municipality.

6. APPLICATION OF THE POLICY

This policy shall apply to all the Councillors, employees, government sectors and other external stakeholders of Makana Municipality

7. TOOLS OF COMMUNICATION

There are different tools of communication, however, Makana Municipality shall apply the following: -

Print Media in the form of Internal Newsletters, Memo, External Newspapers, Departmental and Interdepartmental Letter, Notice Board, Portfolio, Mayoral and Council Agenda as well as Official Written Reports.

Electronic Media in the form of Intranet, Internet, E-Mail, Website, and Telecommunications Network and Community Radio Stations (Radio Grahamstown and Rhodes Music Radio)

The usage of these various tools of communication shall be governed by the foundational values and principles of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (Act 108 of 1996), relevant pieces of applicable legislation, organizational values and code of conduct including other existing institutional policies.

8. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT

The Municipal Structures Act, (Act 117 of 1998), entrusts the Councils of Municipalities, as political custodians, with a responsibility to exercise an oversight role in the performance and application of the mandate of a developmental local government.

At Makana Municipality, this responsibility is delegated to the Executive Mayor together with the Mayoral Committee as a political face of the institution without exonerating the Council from its duties as set-out in the various pieces of legislation and Council procedures.

By implication, the Executive Mayor, has a political responsibility to communicate the views and decisions of the Mayoral Committee and Council to the internal and external structures and members of the public.

The Municipal Systems Act, (Act 32 of 2000), instructs the Municipal Manager, as Chief Accounting Officer, to take full charge and responsibility of the administrative duties of Municipality.

The Executive Mayor and the Municipal Manager are the principal spokespersons of Makana Municipality and their communication must articulate the vision of the municipality.

The Speaker of the Council will be the only authority to communicate on matters regarding the Council Code of Conduct.

The Media and Communication Officer (MCO) will be responsible for the coordination of media conferences, media statements and handling media queries, unless otherwise, the MCO will act on the instruction of the Municipal Manager and the Executive Mayor. Media enquiries are subject to the approval

of the Municipal Manager unless indicated otherwise. The Communications Unit is not in any way to become involved in media opportunities of a political nature. These queries will be referred to the office of the Mayor and/or Speaker to be handled by the Strategic Manager.

In essence, this means that the Municipal Manager as the Head of Administration is charged with a mandate to, amongst other things; ensure a meaningful interface and effective communication within the internal stakeholders on the one hand, as well as between Municipality and external bodies including members of the public on the other.

It is therefore critical that any form of official communication with the external media bodies on behalf of Makana Municipalities must observe and adhere to the legislative provisions, institutional policies and existing structural arrangement and delegation of authority and responsibilities applicable to our institution. The spokespersons should therefore communicate with a singular and unified message that is supporting each other at all times. All role players must be kept up to date within reason of external public communication.

9. BRANDING AND WEBSITE

Makana municipality has a fully developed website that acts as the point for all other services and products within the jurisdiction of the municipality. The website is updated on daily basis as and when requested to comply with the statutory requirements.

The website is being updated with news, notices, legislation and other information as required timeously, it also ensures that citizens, stakeholders and all other spheres of government including visitors to Makana are kept informed regarding service delivery within the municipality. It also has a dedicated space where community members can log their complaints received by the Customer Care who then send them to relevant departments.

Branding is streamlined across all departments. All media and communication aspects of all municipal events are coordinated by the Media and Communication Unit and make sure that there is enough municipal branding in all municipal events. It must be utilized in such a manner that it creates a feeling of unity and pride within the municipality.

10. CONCLUSION

This policy provides a regulatory framework with clear responsibilities and levels of authority including existing institutional arrangement that must be observed and adhered to within Makana Municipality.

It also provides us, as Makana Municipality, with an opportunity to systematically and effectively ensure proper communication between and among the internal stakeholders as well as between Makana Municipality and the external bodies and members of the public.