



## COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR 2010 AND ONWARDS

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## **COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR 2010 AND ONWARDS**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

The City of uMhlatuze has been involved with various communication processes and the need to streamline the communication process has become apparent with the formation of a communication section. With community participation playing a central role in all local government processes, communication is seen as a vital activity to engage community participation. The need to formulate a communication plan has been identified to avoid haphazard and mixed messages and to adopt a strategic approach to the municipality's communication process.

As a result of budget constraints a basic communication plan was compiled in house with a view to expanding thereupon should the need be required.

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

Local Government is obliged to ensure regular and effective communication with the community. Whilst the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 1996 and other legislation requires a high level of transparency, accountability, openness, participatory democracy and direct communication with the public, the communities also have a right and responsibility to participate in local government affairs. Also democratic government aspires to the principles of Batho Pele in putting people first.

In the formulation of a communication plan and to ensure that the rights of the community is honoured the following legislation was considered. As can be seen the legislation imposes a common theme i.e. to communicate internally between different structures and persons and to communicate with the local community:

- Section 195 of the Constitution of Republic of South Africa- administration is governed by the democratic values and principles to ensure that- the public needs are responded to, whilst at the same time the public are encouraged to participate in policy making- public administration must be accountable and transparency is to be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.

- Local Government Municipal Structures Act 1998(Act No 117 of 1998) municipalities must annually review - the needs of the community, prioritise to meet the needs, processes for involving the community, its organisational and delivery mechanisms for meeting the needs of the community, its overall performance in achieving the objectives and develop mechanisms to consult the community and community organisations in performing its functions and exercising its powers.
- Local Government Municipal Systems Act 2000 (Act No 32 of 2000) – the City Manager in his capacity as head of the administration is subject to the policy directions of the municipal council, responsible and accountable for amongst other things managing communication between the municipality's administration and its political structures and political office bearers.
- Section 6 of Municipal Systems Act -the municipality shall be responsive to the needs of the community, facilitate a culture of public service accountability amongst staff, take measures to prevent corruption, establish clear relationships and facilitate cooperation and communication, between it and the local community, give members of the local community full and accurate information about the level and standard of municipal services they are entitled to receive and inform the local community how the municipality is managed of the costs involved and the persons in charge.
- Intergovernmental Relations Act, No 13 of 2005 – to promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations and provide for appropriate mechanisms and procedures to facilitate the settlement of intergovernmental disputes.
- Promotion of Access to Information Act, No 2 of 2000 which gives the people the right to have access to any information which the government has if they need to protect their rights.
- Protection of Disclosure Act No 26 of 2000 which protects people who speak out against government corruption, dishonesty or bad corruption.
- Promotion of Administrative Justice Act No 3 of 2000- all decisions of administrative bodies have to be lawful, procedurally fair and reasonable. People have the right to be given reasons for decisions taken by government officials.

As no sphere of local government operates in a vacuum maximum, communication impact can only be obtained through the involvement of non-governmental

organisations (NGO`s), community based organisations (CBO`s) faith based organisations (FBO`s), civil society organisations, citizens and opinion makers.

### **3. ENVIRONMENT**

Although no workshop or structured survey was conducted to address the perceptions of the communication environment informal discussions were held and other documentation was sourced to gauge perceptions and it is evident that they are generic of nature and as a result these perceptions were used to for the purposes of formulating this communication plan:

#### **Internal**

- Lack of staff loyalty
- Employees not being aware of the functions of the other departments
- Staff not being aware of the role they play in the organisation
- The staff perceive that the management style of this organisation is a more top down approach
- Culture of not accepting responsibility and this is evident in the public being sent from one person to the other
- Duplication of tasks and unnecessary duplication of information
- Poor consultative approach with trade unions

#### **External**

- Information not easily accessible by public
- Misconceptions on the structure, role and functions of the municipality
- Confusion on what services are offered by the municipality
- The processes are perceived by the public to take a long time and as a result they are of the opinion that delivery is slow
- The City needs to comply with regulated legislation and procedures and as a result are perceived as being entangled in red tape

#### 4. PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION POLICY

To provide a structured communication plan with processes and mechanisms that will give direction to the municipality and its stakeholders i.e. councillors, officials, ward committees, organised labour, community and organised community organisations and or interest groups.

#### 5. SCOPE

This plan is designed to function as a general framework within which all council's communication activities shall operate. Its main guiding principle is the development and implementation of open and effective communication. Each department of Council shall develop and implement communication programmes consistent with this policy.

The policy is not intended to limit any requirements imposed by legislation or government regulation, neither does it modify or affect any legal rights available to the public under current legislation. In the event of any conflict between this policy and the legislative requirements, the legislative requirements shall prevail.

#### 6. DEFINITIONS

The meaning of words and phrases contained in this policy is consistent with legislation and government policy mentioned in the preamble of this policy.

**Community:** means the residents of the municipality, the ratepayers of the municipality, any civic organisation and non-governmental, private sector or labour organisations or bodies which are involved in local affairs within the municipality, visitors and other people residing outside the municipality who, because of their presence in the municipality, make use of services or facilities provided by the municipality and includes more specifically the poor and other disadvantaged sections of such body of persons;

**Consult:** - means a two-way communication between the municipality and the public. It requires more of the public involvement than merely receiving the communicated information from the Municipality;

**Inform:** - means the passing of information between Councillors, Officials and the community;

**Involve:** - refers to a high level of a two-way interaction between the Municipality and the public including organised labour ;

**Public Participation:** - refers to a range of activities that members of the community can undertake to assist in planning and/or implementing projects. It also includes analysis of strategies for involving stakeholders, implementing mechanisms and procedures, designing or planning to meet the costs of stakeholder participation, as well as managing the expectations and providing timely feedback and follow-up of decisions taken.

## 7. AIM

The aim of the communication plan is to encourage a **culture of community participation in governing** the operations of the city and to improve the **image**.

In terms of **culture** it is to ensure that communication is recognised as an integral part of the council and all role players must accept this as a value.

**Community participation** requires involvement by councillors and the community to contribute to the affairs of council by sharing expertise, information and interacting. Council shall at all times make itself available to engage in discussions with its citizens.

**Governing** is in terms of facilitating dialogue between the community through ward committees and collective decision-making.

**Public Image is to ensure good public perception of council to encourage involvement by the community.**

## 8. GOALS

The goals of this Communication Policy are:

- To assist elected representatives to understand and be informed by the views of constituents when making decisions on their behalf;

- To develop and maintain co-operative relationships between the Municipality and the community;
- To provide adequate information timeously and in an understandable format to enhance the ability of stakeholders to participate constructively;
- Provision of feedback on the results and outcomes to the community;
- To develop proper support and capacity building for all stakeholders *i.e.* Council, Staff and the community;
- To ensure continuous evaluation and review of the effectiveness of communication;
- To build a culture of shared responsibility around municipal governance.

## 9. PRINCIPLES / CORE VALUES

Accessibility: availability of information to the public regarding avenues to Council leadership, staff and systems of operations;

Accountability: responsibility to the public regarding decisions taken and how the communication processes were considered on the process of decision making;

Commitment: continuous public participation and adherence to the law;

Consistency: communication to be held in good faith and all views to be considered on merit;

Honesty and fairness: objectivity, trustworthiness and inclusiveness without any favour towards any side;

Openness: frankness and trust on all stakeholder communications;

Responsiveness: timely and empathetic consideration of, and to the needs, wants and concerns of stakeholders;

Respect and co-operation: accommodating and considering views and treatment of all stakeholders' values

## 10. WAYS TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNICATION

- **Information-** for communication to be interactive it needs to convey a message and enable the creation and sharing of ideas. The information contained in the communication needs to be readily available and interactive. The provision of information encourages accountability, participation, an improved



understanding and informed decision making. Information is dependent on the quality and needs to be of a high standard, up to date and presented in an appropriate format for the receiver and must be sensitive to the needs of the audience.

- **Accessibility-** the effectiveness of communication is dependent on the level of accessibility that exists between the two parties. Council should have access to the community and the community should have access to municipal departments, its personnel and councillors. The environment should be accessible and available to all and there should be no barriers to prevent access to the decision-making process, administration and roleplayers. The decision making process needs to be made more accessible to improve interaction, improved understanding and informed decision-making.

## 11. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

Effective public participation and communication between the Council, Municipality and the community can only occur if there is synergy in the functions, structures, mechanisms, roles and responsibilities of the Municipality. This policy clearly identifies the key role players / stakeholders according to their location *i.e.* internal or external and their various functions and responsibilities.

### Internal role players

The following role players exist within the municipality:

- Councillors
- Mayor and Executive Committee
- Speaker
- Municipal Manager and Municipal Departments
- Ward Committees
- Amakhosi (Traditional Authorities)
- Community Development Workers (CDW)

### Councillors

Councillors are directly elected to represent and serve the people. This role is both formal through Council processes, but also informal through lobbying and consultation.

### Functions and responsibilities:

- Councillors should be in touch with the issues on the ground / within their areas;
- Councillors should ensure that the community is consulted and kept informed about Council decisions, development and budget plans that affect them;
- Councillors should act as a spokesperson for the people through the committees, caucuses and meetings of Council;
- Councillors must assist the community in solving any municipal problems they experience, and by bringing those problems to the attention of the City Manager or the Head of the relevant Department.

### **Mayor and Executive Committee**

KwaZulu-Natal adopted the Executive Committee System. Both the Structures Act and the Municipal Systems Act accord / confer the functions of public participation and communication to the Executive Committee.

### Functions and responsibilities:

- Annually consult / inform / involve the community on specific issues such as the IDP and the Municipal Budget;
- Keep the community abreast of imminent policy changes, particularly those that may affect a large sector of the community;
- Monitor public participation and ensure that the views of the public are taken into account when decisions are made;
- Market and promote the municipality as a haven for investment.

### **Speaker**

Both the Structures Act and the Systems Act are silent on the Speakers role in regard to public participation functions. However, the Speaker presides on Council meetings and must ensure compliance of both the Council and Council Committees with the prescriptions of the Structures and Systems Act. This therefore places the Speaker at the helm of ensuring proper public participation and communication within the Council.

## Functions and responsibilities:

The functions of the Speaker are set out in Section 37 of the Municipal Structures Act.

The Speaker of a Municipal Council -

- (a) presides at meetings of the Council;
- (b) performs the duties and exercises the powers delegated to the Speaker in terms of Section 32;
- (c) must ensure that the Council meets at least quarterly;
- (d) must maintain order during meetings;
- (e) must ensure compliance in the Council and Council Committees with the Code of Conduct set out in Schedule 5;
- (f) must ensure that Council meetings are conducted in accordance with the rules and orders of the Council.

In synopsis the Speaker must:

- Meet regularly with Ward Councillors to ensure appropriate communication with the community;
- Ensure that representations of Ward Committees and Stakeholder groups are channeled to the appropriate Municipal structures / functionaries;
- Ensure annual monitoring and evaluation of community involvement by the Municipality.

The City Council of uMhlathuze has bestowed a further additional responsibility as resolved on 4 December 2007:

*“ the establishment of a Section 79 Committee – the **Public Participation Committee** - under the convenorship of the Speaker, the purpose of which will be to give effect to Chapter 5 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) which deals with the IDP by ensuring structured and wider, more intense and representative public participation”*

## City Manager and Municipal Departments

The Systems Act clearly stipulates that the City Manager is the head of municipal administration. The Act states it clearly that administration must set a conducive environment for the community to participate in the affairs of the municipality. In view of the other broad strategic and operational issues that the City Manager must deal with, the task of directly arranging public participation is delegated to the Department of City Development as well as all the Departments of the municipality.

Public participation is a constitutional and specific legal requirement for all municipalities. Therefore all Municipal Departments must encourage and ensure proper public participation and communication in their Departmental activities, including the level, quality, range and impact of municipal services provided to the community.

The City Manager as the Accounting Officer for the Municipality, as prescribed by the Municipal Systems Act, has a direct responsibility to ensure that public participation and communication is done adequately. However, it is apparent that the City Manager is not able to personally attend to this huge responsibility, hence the task is delegated to all Municipal Departments but the Department of City Development has a direct responsibility to ensure adequate public participation and communication.

### Functions and responsibilities:

The functions and responsibilities listed below do not only apply directly to the Department of City Development but also require adherence by all municipal departments:

- Co-ordinate / integrate public participation and communication;
- Elect and maintain support for Ward Committees as the legal structure for all the municipal public participation and communication;
- Develop and maintain register and forums for other stakeholders or interest groups;
- Develop a generic year planner that takes into consideration the timing of IDP and budget processes for public participation;
- Develop internal and external mechanisms and procedures to be followed in the public participation and communication process;
- Monitor and evaluate public participation / communication continuously and through annual reports.

## Ward Committees

UMhlathuze Municipality has 30 ward committees all of which are functional. Their existence and operational requirements are in accordance with the contents of the Municipal Structures Act. They are a clear statutory structure at the disposal of the municipality to be used for public participation / communication.

### Functions and responsibilities:

- Serve as the formal unbiased communication channel between the community and the municipality through the Ward Councillor;
- Ensure co-operative partnership that is constructive and harmonious between the Municipality and the community;
- A key community consultative body on the IDP, budget, LED, Performance Management and any policy affecting the community;
- Receive queries and complaints from residents and communicate same through the Ward Councillor;
- Make recommendations to Council regarding any matter affecting the respective ward;
- Deal with other functions assigned by the Council.

## Ward Councillor

The ward councillor must ensure that the community is consulted and kept informed about the decisions of council, development and budget plans that affect them. As a direct link between council and the community he/she must also assist the communities in solving problems they are experiencing by bring these to the attention of the municipal officials.

## Amakhosi (Traditional Authority)

The role and function of Amakhosi within the current democratic governance system is highly contested. The Structures Act (s81) prescribes that municipal councils should allow Amakhosi to attend and participate in the proceedings of the Council. This therefore necessitates the need for proper communication that will consider the protocols of the norms and values of the traditional system.

The Amakhosi have their own public participation structures, which may compliment and sometimes contradict the Municipality. It is therefore crucial that any

communication or public participation system observe the dynamics of the traditional authority areas.

### Functions and responsibilities:

- Promote good relations and co-operation between the Municipality and the communities under the traditional rule;
- Advise Council on any policy that impacts on communities under the traditional authority;
- Participate and encourage communities to strongly partake in the Municipality's consultation processes of IDP, budget, LED, Performance Management and any matter on the agenda for community participation and communication;
- Support the municipality in the implementation of development programmes; and
- Participate and encourage the communities' involvement in the initiatives to monitor, review and evaluate council's programmes, particularly regarding rural up-liftment and development.

## **Community Development Workers (CDW`s)**

The Community Development Workers (CDWs) are a key programme of the National Government, aimed at bridging the gap between Government and the communities. They play a role of integrated public servants who are capable of assisting communities with access to government information and services across all spheres of Government. They answer a range of questions and requests for information from citizens while out in the field, across the full spectrum of the Government.

### Functions and responsibilities:

- Liaise, co-ordinate, inform, and assist communities with access to services provided by the spheres of Government;
- Forge and sustain partnerships;
- Identify community needs and facilitate development of projects and programmes;
- Focus on poverty eradication, job creation, reintegration of marginalized individuals-families-groups and communities, and capacity building for self sufficiency;
- Advocate for protection of rights for children, women and people with disabilities, and those affected by violence; and

- Educate, provide life skills and economic empowerment for youth and women.

## **External role players / stakeholders**

The White Paper in Local Government states that rapid changes at the global, regional, national and provincial levels necessitate that communities rethink the way they are organised and governed, in order to build strong communities, sustain economy, protect environment, improve personal safety and eliminate poverty. Local government is therefore expected to build a sense of common purpose among its citizens so as to find local solutions for increased sustainability.

The Systems Act (s17) prescribes that the municipality must ensure public participation through other appropriate mechanisms and processes established by the Municipality. It further states that the Municipality must ensure consultative sessions with locally recognised organisations. Hence, this policy identifies the following external stakeholders, which this municipality involves in the consultation process:

- Government Departments
- Business
- CBO/NGO's
- Interest Groups
- Tertiary Institutions

## **Functions and Responsibility**

All the external stakeholders have different expertise and roles in the community served by the municipality. Their main responsibility will be to make a meaningful contribution and assistance to the municipality, in line with their field of expertise. The Department of City Development will compile and update continuously a register / list / database.

## **12. COMMUNICATION MECHANISMS AND PROCEDURES**

Depending on whether the public is to be consulted, informed or involved, various forms of participation can be used. The Systems Act (s17) prescribes that the municipality must establish appropriate mechanisms which take into consideration special needs of people who cannot read or write, people with disabilities, women and other disadvantaged groups. The following mechanisms are thus in line with the prescriptions of the Systems Act:

- a) Ward Committee meetings (Clusters)
- b) Public meetings (Izimbizo / State of the City Address)
- c) Outreach Programmes
- d) Amakhosi Forum
- e) Community Development Forum
- f) Government Events
- g) Media
- h) Notices
- i) Newsletters
- j) Community Talking Boxes
- k) Website
- l) Petitions
- m) Municipal Interdepartmental meetings
- n) Loud hailing
- o) Sms (short message service)

- ***Ward Committee Meetings***

Purpose: To consult, inform or involve Ward Committee members and the community on any matter pertaining to the ward and the Municipality

Frequency: monthly, but can be more, depending on issues the municipality / community regard as requiring a meeting.

- ***Clusters***

Purpose: To consult, inform or involve Ward Committee members and the community in a bigger group with almost similarities.

Frequency: Twice in a year or as and when the need arise.

- ***Public Meetings (Izimbizo / State of the City Address)***

Purpose: To consult, inform and educate the community about various council plans, programmes and achievements

Frequency: Annually



- **Outreach Programmes**

Purpose: To inform, involve and empower the community.  
 Frequency: Dependent on the availability of financial resources

- **Amakhosi Forum**

Purpose: To consult, inform, involve and collaborate with the Amakhosi on municipal issues, particularly those that affect their areas.  
 Frequency: Quarterly and whenever necessary.

- **Community Development Forums**

The Development Facilitation Act No. 67 of 1995 strongly encourages the establishment of community development forums (CDF) to promote participation. These forums will be used to integrate and co-ordinate participation of external stakeholders *i.e.* Government Departments, Business, CBO/NGO's, Interest Groups and Tertiary Institutions.

Five CDFs have been established, *i.e.* Business Forum, Crime Forum, Transport Forum, Youth\ Gender Forum and Social Forum that will deal with Housing, Education, and Health and Welfare issues.

Purpose: To consult, inform, involve and collaborate with structures that have expertise on particular matters.  
 Frequency: Quarterly and when necessary

- **Government events**

Purpose: To inform, involve and collaborate  
 Frequency: As per National or Provincial Government directive, **but** availability of resources on the part of this Council will determine the extent of involvement\ participation.

- **Media**

Purpose: To inform and involve community on various matters that other forms of participation would take long to conclude.

Frequency: According to the need and urgency. The type and source of media selected will be determined in terms of the target audience, funding and urgency.

- **Notices**

Purpose: Public notification can be divided into 3 main distinct functions *i.e.* to inform public about the possible disruption of services, implementation of large projects that will impact on a number of people and to announce public meetings and hearings.

Frequency: Whenever necessary.

- **Newsletter(external)**

Purpose: To inform and educate the public about Council's plans, programmes and achievements.

Frequency: Once a month.

- **Newsletter(internal)**

Purpose: To inform and educate the staff about Council's plans, programmes and achievements and to also improve working relationship with staff.

Frequency: Once a month

- **Community Talking Boxes**

Purpose: To receive feedback from the community

Frequency: Weekly

- **Website(internet)**

Purpose: To inform and receive feedback

Frequency: Continuous

- **Website(intranet)**

Purpose: To inform, educate staff and receive feedback

Frequency: Continuous

- **Petitions and complaints**

Purpose: To receive community requests and complaints or concerns.

Frequency: Whenever necessary

- ***Municipal Interdepartmental meetings***

Purpose: Consultation and collaboration  
Frequency: Monthly and when necessary

- ***Loud hailing***

Purpose: Announcement of meetings or abrupt disruption of service.  
Frequency: According to the need and when necessary.

- ***SMS system***

Purpose: To inform the public of disruptions of services and inform/remind councillors and public of meetings  
Frequency: When necessary

## **PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES**

S17 (2) of the Systems Act requires the municipality to establish processes and procedures for public meetings, consultative sessions with locally recognised community organizations including traditional councils, notifying of the community about municipal issues and how the public must submit their comments and taking into account the special needs of people who cannot read or write. Herein are Standard Operating Procedures that meet the legal obligations.

### ***Procedures for meetings and events***

The procedures and processes suggested herein will apply to Ward Committee meetings, public meetings, outreach programmes, community development forums and government events.

Methods:

- a) Public notices to be placed on community notice boards in all municipal offices and in well populated areas e.g. shops, taxi ranks, churches and schools within a minimum period of 14 days before the event where possible;
- b) Media, both print and radio( where possible and dependant upon financial resources);
- c) Notice must specify date, venue, time, purpose of the event and correct details for further information required;

- d) Internal communication to all Council Staff and Councillors
- e) Loud hailing and pamphlets.

#### Checklists:

Each event or function must have resources relevant to the functions / event. The resources listed here reflect the broad items necessary for any function or event, but will also vary according to the event or function.

- a) Sound system
- b) Decoration and exhibition
- c) Speakers
- d) Transport (when necessary)
- e) Safety and security (including 1<sup>st</sup> aid)
- f) Language (interpreter where necessary)
- g) Refreshments and entertainment (where necessary)
- h) Programme / Agenda (to be delivered in advance to ward committee and community development committees)

#### ***Procedure and Processes for Amakhosi Forum***

This is the most delicate and somehow complicated process, which requires character and humility. Traditional norms and values are central and have to be adhered to accordingly.

#### Methods:

- a) Verbal explanation of any event, project or notice to be done in advance through telephone or physical visit to the traditional authority area;
- b) Notice or invitation will be hand delivered where possible, 14 days before the meeting or the event;
- c) New projects to be developed in full consultation with AmaKhosi from the initial stage; and
- d) Continuous feedback on all issues.

#### ***Media/radio***

Media plays an important role of providing the public with news and information, and also to report on the public's views and opinions about the Municipality.

Therefore this policy advocates for pro-active relations with the media environment.

**Methods:**

- a) Press releases through written statements;
- b) Press/news conference through interviews;
- c) Talk-show slots in the local radio stations;
- d) Prompt response to media enquiries or unfounded statements or allegations against the municipality.

**Checklist:**

- a) Mandate / Authority from Council or City Manager to deal with media;
- b) Deadlines for publication with regard to print media, while for radio it is appropriate time for the talk-show slot;
- c) Proper and relevant information to ensure quality, consistency and effective communication;
- d) When speaking as council representative, a person must identify his/her name and position;
- e) All remarks must be guided by policies, programs, services and initiatives of the Council;
- f) Proficiency in language used by the relevant media.

**Notices**

Disturbances in the normal provision of services or the implementation of a substantial project must be communicated properly to the community.

**Method:**

- a) The SMS system will be used at short notice to inform the public in cases of emergency for any disturbance of service. In situations should time allow a notice must be published in a newspaper at least 3 days before the work is commenced and for a substantial project at least 7 days;
- b) Notice should state clearly the work to be done, the date, exact place, start and finish time as well as appropriate warnings;
- c) Notice must also be put up at municipal buildings, community notice boards and in well populated areas;
- d) All notices must be of substantial size and be clearly visible;
- e) The language used must be relevant to the community intended for the notice;
- f) The relevant ward councillor and ward committee to be informed prior to the issuing of the notice.

### ***Community Talk Boxes***

Feedback, whether negative or positive is important.

Method:

- a) Community talk boxes must be placed at all Municipal Offices where public have easy access;
- b) A questionnaire regarding the community's views and opinions about council activities and services to be placed next to the boxes and if possible also next to the cashiers;
- c) Boxes must be opened every last day of the normal working week (Fridays) and feedback be analysed;
- e) Results of the feedback must be communicated quarterly through the newsletter.

### ***Petitions and Complaints***

It is important to understand that many public comments, requests and complaints are sincere. It is therefore important that all petitions and complaints be responded to appropriately.

Method:

- a) All written petitions and complaints will be processed through registry;
- b) Verbal telephone complains *e.g.* regarding service, emergency, water, electricity to be recorded by the relevant departments;
- c) All telephone numbers and proper address for the Municipality will be made public;
- d) The existing audit trail to track correspondence will be followed to ensure that all petitions and complaints are responded to;
- e) Responses will be timely, clear and substantive.

### ***Interdepartmental Meetings***

Section 55(1) of the Systems Act prescribes that the municipal administration should be responsive to the needs of the community to participate in the affairs of the municipality. All Municipal Departments must ensure that the public is

involved and clearly aware of the services and/or activities, which the municipality delivers to the community.

### Method

- a) The Department of City Development as the responsible Department must establish an Inter-departmental community liaison team to meet once a month;
- b) The inter-departmental liaison team must integrate and co-ordinate municipal communication regarding services, projects, IDP, budget, events and any issue that council or management decide to communicate to the public (avoiding duplication) and formulate a common year planner;
- c) The Department of City Development to lead and assist Municipal Departments with community facilitation;
- d) Departments requiring community facilitation assistance will fill in the form (DMS#218109) giving at least 14 working days;
- e) Facilitation by the Department of City Development will be limited to ensuring that the venue for the meeting is available, announcing and making notices to the public or the intended community and by providing the sound system where necessary;
- f) The Inter-departmental liaison team must set-up clear indicators for motivating and evaluating the effectiveness of community participation.

## **RESOURCES**

In order for the communication strategy to be effective it should be adequately resourced. The Council has various means that meet this prescription e.g. staff, offices, IT equipment, transport and budget and these must be continuously reviewed

### **Staff**

The staff of the Department of City Development is responsible for communication. The Communication Section within this Department co-ordinates all communication issues. There are eight suitable officials *i.e.* 1 Deputy Manager Communications, 1x Chief Public Relations Officer, 1x Chief Community Facilitation Officer, 1x Senior Administration Officer, 1 x Community Facilitator, 1 x Administration Assistant Grade 11 and 1x Clerk Grade 1. The continuous changes and various challenges that exist within communities requires that community facilitators undergo training and interact with officials

from other municipalities continuously in order to possess the highest level of skills required when dealing with the public/community.

### **Office accommodation**

The Communication Unit is located at the Civic Centre in Empangeni. One staff member is housed in Richards Bay to assist with communication, in line with the Batho-Pele principle of access to the services to which public is entitled.

### **IT and Communication Equipment**

All the staff has access to computers and are computer literate to provide administrative support to the public, to ward committees, CDW's and Community Development Forums regarding notices and agendas for meetings. Staff also has access to printing machines, and said access is in line with the municipality's management policy on computers and printing equipment.

Communication with the staff of the Communication section can be done as follows:

Designation	Name	Telephone number	Email address
Deputy Manager	C M Koekemoer	035 9075406	kcm@richemp.org.za
Chief Public Relations Officer	Ms S Gasa	035 9075405	Silindile.gasa@richemp.org.za
Chief Community Facilitation Officer	Ms N Zulu	035 907 5404	Nomsa.zulu@richemp.org.za
Facilitation Coordinator	M Z Zungu	035 907 5437	Maxwell.Zungu@richemp.org.za
Senior Administration Officer	Ms A J Nel	035 907 5403	ajnel@richemp.org.za
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## ***Budget***

The budget for communication follows the Council budgeting processes. The section Communication is responsible for the drafting of the sections budget and the Senior Manager City Development is accountable for the implementation of the budget.

The budget covers the following issues:

- a) Equipment and tools
- b) Printing and stationary
- c) Events (as determined by council)
- d) Training (capacity building programmes for councillors, officials, public)
- e) Publication costs (include radio broadcasts, pamphlets and print media)

## ***Venues for public/community meetings***

All legal and properly recognised / organised meetings will as far as circumstances permit be held in Council venues *i.e.* community halls, Council chambers, committee rooms, auditorium and library halls. The Municipality's procedures for booking the venues apply to all meetings requiring venues. The Communication Section or Councilor will be responsible for the booking of venues, except in extreme circumstances a recognised member of a Ward Committee or a community development forum can also make bookings.

Tents, schools or churches will be used as alternative venues, in circumstances where the public meeting or event is held in an area that is remote from the Council venues.

## ***Transport***

This is divided into two *i.e.* for Officials when doing Council work and for public to attend meetings:

- a) Officials

The Deputy Manager Communications, Chief Public Relations Officer, Chief Community Facilitation Officer and the Facilitation Coordinator

participate in the Council car allowance scheme. The Community Facilitator makes use of a dedicated pool vehicle in terms of Council's policy and procedures for fleet control.

b) Public

- Council remunerates Ward Committee members in accordance with the policy on ward committees which has been formulated.
- Community Development Forum members will not be provided any transport arrangements. Their respective institutions and organisations will be responsible for their transport.
- Transport for public/general meetings and events will be provided according to the availability of resources after a thorough assessment of the need to provide such transport.

### ***Public Communication Tools and Equipment***

Facilitation and participation will be as effective as the tools and equipment that is used to announce and facilitate the meetings. The following equipments constitute the core tools/equipment:

- Sound system – Communication in public meetings.
- Loud hailers (mobile and hand) – Public announcement of meetings and communication in meetings outside halls.
- Overhead and data projectors – to make data and visual presentations.
- Cameras – to record each event for annual report purposes.

### **PROTOCOL**

The protocol referred in this policy relates to public participation meetings and events only. A thorough protocol policy that refers to symbols, emblems, tables of precedence (seating arrangement), forms of address (written or verbal), official visit procedures, guidelines for hospitality, official honours and awards, as well as gifts and dress codes still needs to be developed.

Councillors in their respective positions *i.e.* Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Speaker, Executive Committee members, Portfolio Chairpersons and Ward leaders attend various public meetings and events and have to be recognized. Amakhosi, Izinduna, MEC's and Senior Government Officials also attend certain (specific) events and public meetings and also have to be recognised. Besides recognition, the various notable persons mentioned herein, have to be included in the agenda/programme for the day.

The following guidelines are to be used as an interim measure until a formulated guideline on protocol is received to address the protocol demands for various events:

### ***Council Public meetings or Events***

Section 49 (1b) of the Structures Act prescribes that the Mayor must among other things; perform ceremonial duties for the Municipality. Therefore the Mayor/Deputy will be the main speaker or perform the most significant function/item of the Municipal public meeting or event.

The person responsible for the programme of the event will introduce all Councillors present according to their respective portfolio or status within the Council.

The Speaker will make closing remarks or vote of thanks.

### ***Launching\ Handing over of Projects***

The procedure as contained in **Council Public Meetings or Events** shown above will be maintained. However the Ward Councillor will make brief welcome comments and the Portfolio Chairperson will give a brief background about the project. In an event where the project overlaps over two or more Wards, the Portfolio Chairperson will speak on the project. The Ward Councillors role is only to make brief welcoming comments.

### ***Public meetings or events with MEC/Minister and Inkosi***

The Deputy Mayor will make the introduction of all dignitaries present, the Mayor will make the opening remarks, the MEC/Minister will be the main speaker / perform the most significant function / item for the event and the Speaker will make closing remarks or vote of thanks.

Inkosi or his/her representative must always be included in the programme of the events. He/she will make welcoming comments or speak on behalf of the respective community. If there is more than one Inkosi attending the event, the acknowledgement by the Deputy Mayor will be sufficient.

## **13. RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

### **City Manager**

In terms of Section 55(1) of the Municipal Systems Act and the strong focus that communication is placed on the City Manager which is also linked to his/her appointment as Information Officer in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, it is befitting that the City Manager assumes responsibility for the communication function of the municipality.

Therefore all media enquiries should be directed to the City Manager in the first instance who will liaise with the Senior Manager or Communications Unit for any contact with the media relating to council business including providing copies, media releases or other forms of communication. No official other than the Head of Department or person acting in his stead may make statements to the press and in such circumstances these officials to ensure circumspection when talking to the press in order to avoid embarrassment to Council.

### **Mayor**

In terms of Section 49 of the Municipal Structures Act the mayor must preside at the meetings of the Executive Committee. Specific responsibilities have also been placed on the mayor to communicate with the community on the budget process in terms of the municipal Finance Management Act. This in turn does allow the mayor to communicate directly with the media on specific issues of council business.

The Mayor is also responsible to market and promote the municipality and encourage investment and also keep the community informed of developments, achievements etc. As a result the Mayor is the spokesperson on Council business or matters of Council.

### **Staff**

With the exception of the City Manager and Senior Managers and Managers staff are not permitted to speak to the media unless prior permission has been granted by the City Manager.

## 14. WAYS TO IMPROVE COUNCIL'S COMMUNICATION

As Council is responsible for facilitating communication to the community, council needs to be proactive in improving the way it communicates its message to the public and staff.

Communication at council occurs at two levels i.e. internal (personnel and councillors) and external (media, community, ward committees etc)

### External communication

Currently information on Council issues is shared with the community by means of media reports, newsletters, radio talk shows, council agendas, posters, pamphlets, campaigns, ward committee meetings etc.

It is important that the information is shared in an efficient and effective manner and the public is influenced to become involved. This can be done by means of:

- Improving council's image- a survey needs to be conducted to determine both the external and internal image to determine perceptions of the existing image and also the attitudes and perceptions of staff and the community. Regular surveys must be conducted
- Training of front line personnel- to improve the service provided to the community front line personnel need to be trained in public relations and service delivery skills as the staff play an important role in image
- Website- to be more user friendly with up to date information and include information such as agendas, minutes, personnel vacancies etc. The web site needs to be brought in line with the new corporate brand and new features and applications needs to be researched like stakeholders communiqué etc
- A-Z guide to be updated- information booklet on the roles and responsibilities of the different departments, councillors needs to be updated and distributed at the various service points
- Information centres- decentralised information centres need to be established throughout the city to deal with complaints, provision of material and brochures of council etc. This could be in line with the Thusong Centres and such will encourage dialogue with residents and draw urgent matters to council
- Opening of new projects- although the community is made aware of the opening of new projects such projects are done haphazardly and efforts should be put in place to ensure that new projects are done in a organised and planned way and same must be identified well in advance and in accordance with a programme

- Ward meetings- although ward meetings are held regularly they need to be used more effectively and encourage interaction and participation by the community
- Lack of understanding of council decisions- measures should be put into place by officials and councillors to explain policies and decisions in a more understandable way to the community.
- Means of communication – the communication of the information should be done in a manner befitting the sensitivity of the audience. It must be understandable and appropriate

#### Objective 1- Improve Public Image

- Improve council's image
- Training of front line personnel
- Dissemination of information on internet
- Creation of decentralised information centres
- Ensure a more planned approach to opening of new projects

#### Objective 2 - Improve Community Involvement

- Improve the functioning of ward committees
- Improving linkages with ward committees
- Use of appropriate material and equipment in communication
- Encourage community participation in the formulation of decisions
- Ensure that decisions and policies are understood

## Internal Communication

Internal communications are those procedures and systems used to communicate information to personnel and councillors. An effective organisation is reliant on an informed personnel and it is essential that personnel are knowledgeable of the functions of the organisation, as they will be better equipped to provide an improved service. The communication needs of staff needs to be taken into account.

Councillors should be empowered to liaise with the community on projects, initiatives, feedback sessions etc and personnel should be able to provide councillors with the necessary support in preparation for the meetings. Councillors should also be informed of progress of projects, changes and activities initiated by personnel.

All existing channels of communication should be used to disseminate information and dialogue should be promoted to ensure interaction of management with councillors, personnel with management and personnel with councillors. Improved interaction will strengthen working relationships and improve the effectiveness of council.

Objective 1- Improve communication by making lines more direct by

- encouraging meetings to promote dialogue
- improving and disseminating information on the intranet/newsletters/emails etc
- improving and making more information available on the internet

## **15. IMPROVE EMPLOYEE AND TRADE UNION RELATIONS**

Although the need to improve communication internally has been discussed at length, which does not only entail relations between staff but also organised labour. Specific mention is being made of the need to foster improved relations between employee and organised labour as it is important to improve the service rendered by Council.

The key to effective bargaining is communication between and within the parties during all phases of the relationship not only at the bargaining table. Improving union and management relationship needs to be part of the process of improving work. This entails concerns about productivity, quality, productivity and making work more satisfying. This is done by focusing on the customer. The relationship between employee and trade unions sets the tone and it has been proposed by industrial relations consultants for the trade unions to be considered as suppliers and the forming of collaboration as a means of working together for a common purpose. There needs to be less traditional employee and trade union relationship. The sharing of all information and operating pragmatically, with mutual respect and trust, to engage in mutual problem solving. It is a management by influence rather than authority where there is a consensus culture, in which management, some with union input, and some decisions made jointly.

Objective:

- Management and trade unions need to keep the organisation competitive and must focus on the customer
- There must be mutual respect and willingness to work hard in understanding each others objectives
- Transparency and information sharing are the necessary foundations of mutual trust
- Continued, intensive communication is essential within management, within union membership and between management and union membership

## 16. USE OF LANGUAGE

A communication policy also needs to address the use of language in the affairs of Council. As a result the language usage of the municipality's residence needs to :

- take in account language preferences
- support impartial service delivery by promoting equal access to municipal services and programmes by removing communication or language barriers
- promote multilingualism amongst municipal staff and communities
- promote the use of the three official languages viz English, isiZulu and Afrikaans in the affairs of the municipality

### **.Official language of council**

The three official languages ie isiZulu , English and Afrikaans will be used in any debate and proceedings of Council and its committees and for this reason an interpretation/translation service must be available at these meetings.

All motions, reports, notices, policies, bylaws, minutes and resolutions of council will be available in English and where a specific need arises for the proceedings of council and its committees to be available in one of the other two official languages i.e. isiZulu and Afrikaans such translation will be made.

Use of the other two official languages i.e. isiZulu and Afrikaans will be promoted in correspondence and in meetings with the communities taking into account the needs of the usage of the residents.

### **Disciplinary hearings**

All disciplinary hearings will be conducted in one of the three official languages as preferred by the person involved in the hearing. For this reason, interpretation/translation service must be available.

### **Official notices and advertisements**

All official notices and advertisements issued/published by the City, for general public information, must be issued in isiZulu and English.



## **Internal Communication**

English will be used for the purpose of communicating in the administration.

Provided that if the addressee does not understand the; language of use in which he/she is communicated with, he/she may request that communication with him/her takes place in a language of which he/she understands.

## **17. CONCLUSION**

The City of uMhlathuze is committed to ensuring that the community becomes actively involved in the affairs of the municipality in terms with the principles contained in the Constitution of the republic of South Africa and other statutory legislation referred to in this document , it is hoped that this communication strategy will ensure broad based community involvement in the governance of the City of uMhlathuze and improved relations of staff ensuring an improved service to the community