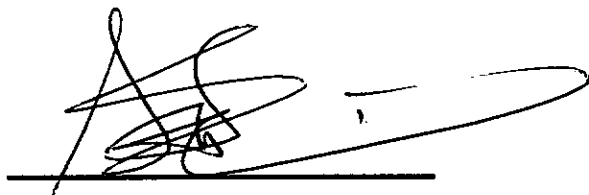
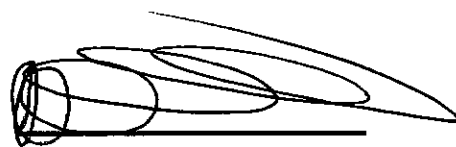


Customer Care Policy



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<u>PART 1:</u> BACKGROUND	3
<u>PART 2:</u> OBJECTIVE	3
<u>PART 3:</u> CUSTOMER CARE	3
<u>PART 4:</u> MUNICIPAL SYSTEMS ACT	4
<u>PART 5:</u> PURPOSE OF THE PLAN	5
<u>PART 6:</u> DELIVERABLES IDENTIFIED	5
<u>PART 7:</u> CUSTOMER CARE CYCLE	6
<u>PART 8:</u> CUSTOMER CARE SERVICE CHARTER	7
<u>PART 9:</u> WARD COUNCILLOR RESPONSIBILITIES	8

1. BACKGROUND

Local Government, as with other Government service institutions are normally the target of remarks regarding inefficiency and the lack of will to serve customers effectively. However we have reached a point where a consumer has become a customer and have customer needs and expectations to be satisfied.

2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Municipality is:

- 2.1. To provide a reliable, responsive, competent, accessible, courteous, multi-optional, affordable quality service and to treat consumers with empathy at all times and under all circumstances.
- 2.2. To define a manageable customer care framework to ensure loyalty and participation of consumers into the objectives of the municipality
- 2.3. To restore and promote the culture of paying for services rendered and used,
- 2.4. To protect Municipal services users who are paying for their services; and
- 2.5. To encourage those not paying, to do so in the interest of sustainable services delivery.

3. CUSTOMER CARE

'Customer Care' is a comprehensive approach that provides seamless co-ordination between all departments of the Municipality. Promoting awareness amongst employees to become more consumer orientated. To provide a good, efficient service, communicating this to a customer or consumer which in turn would achieve a higher customer satisfaction.

This awareness should also make it much easier to manage revenue for services rendered and elevate Revenue protection to a whole new level.

4. MUNICIPAL SYSTEMS ACT CHAPTER 9, CLAUSE 95

Clause 95 of the Systems Act describes customer care actions to be taken by Municipalities. One can clearly see that this act sets minimum service levels and not necessarily business type customer care actions.

“In relation to the levying of rates and other taxes by a municipality and the charging of fees for municipal services, a municipality must, within its financial and administrative capacity “:

- *Establish a sound customer care management system that aims to create a positive and reciprocal relation between persons liable for these payments and the municipality, and where applicable, a service provider;*
- *Establish mechanisms for users of services and ratepayers to give feedback to the municipality or other service providers regarding the quality of the services and the performance of the service provider;*
- *Take responsible steps to ensure that users of services are informed of the costs involved in service provision, the reasons for the payment of service fees, and the manner in which monies raised from the service are utilized;*
- *Where the consumption of services has to be measured, take reasonable steps to ensure that the consumption by individual users of services is measured through accurate and verifiable metering systems;*
- *Ensure that persons liable for payments, receive regular and accurate accounts that indicate the basis for calculating the amounts due;*
- *Provide accessible mechanisms for those persons to query or verify accounts and metered consumption, and appeal procedures which allow such persons to receive prompt redress for inaccurate accounts’*
- *Provide accessible mechanisms for dealing with complaints from such persons, together with prompt replies and corrective action by the municipality;*
- *Provide mechanisms to monitor the response time and efficiency in complying with the above;*
- *Provide accessible pay points and other mechanisms for settling accounts of for making pre-payments for services.*

From the above it is clear that these requirements are absolutely the minimum, however by implementing these very basic features well, positive progress can be made towards better and managed customer relations.

5. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

- 5.1. The purpose of this plan is to firstly improve business efficiency and performance by providing a reliable, responsive, competent, accessible, courteous, confidential and secure service.
- 5.2. Creating higher levels of employee satisfaction by providing good training and motivation and two-way communication; and endorsing and rewarding excellent performance.
- 5.3. Increasing revenue by rendering an efficient, effective and economical service.
- 5.4. The effective dissemination of information through the application of employee feedback systems and customer feedback systems.
- 5.5. Installing a customer orientated culture throughout the Municipality.
- 5.6. Developing a uniform complaints procedure.
- 5.7. Producing a customer care guide.

6. DELIVERABLES IDENTIFIED

- As the corporate body for customer care, acting as the Municipality's voice regarding the standard of service delivery and being the first point of contact for the public.
- Co-ordinating complaints of a multi disciplinary nature and making better interaction between departments possible by consolidating comments and compiling appropriate replies to customers.
- Acting as facilitator between various departments of the Municipality and customers / complaints by indicating and co-ordinating meetings between relevant parties with the aim of resolving sensitive and complex issues.
- Managing the customer care centres with a view to resolving any type of municipal matter.
- Conducting regular surveys to determine the perceptions of the community and using this information as an aid to render a more effective service and determine points of concern.

- Enhancing the perception among ratepayers that the municipality gives high priority to customer satisfaction by co-ordinating personal visits / inspections to high problem sites.
- Conducting personal interviews with customers / consumers regarding their complaints.
- Establishing a uniform complaints procedure for the municipality.
- Continually disseminating info to the public e.g. correct telephone numbers to be used for the municipality, e-mail addresses etc.
- Ensuring that all municipal forms and directives are compiled in plain unambiguous language that caters for the linguistic needs of the community, with due observance of proficiency in written or spoken medium. Acting as a communication channel between the Municipality, Councillors and Ward communities in respect of complaints and enquiries.
- Compiling a crisis communication plan for customer care.
- Assisting in benchmarking reaction times to the various categories of complaints / enquiries.
- Fostering a service orientated culture.
- Ensuring that designated staff receives training to meet the changing demands on the Municipality as a provider of excellent customer services.
- Identifying the training needs for all municipal front desk staff to ensure a professional, customer friendly environment for all residents.
- Identifying recurring complaints and proactively seeking solutions with the providers of such services.

7. CUSTOMER CARE CYCLE

- The Municipality provides services to the consumers.
- Afford opportunities for customer queries to be addressed.
- Implement the follow up process of query resolution.
- Ensure community interaction outside the office,
- Implement processes and procedures to assist customers and ensure adequate processes to produce accurate and credible accounts.

- Bill for the services rendered.
- Issue accounts to consumers.
- Remind customers by issuing notices to settle accounts.
- Issue final notices to non-paying consumers, a further opportunity to the consumer to either raise queries or to make arrangements for account payment.
- Consult with non-paying consumers, as part of the final demand process and actual credit control action and enforcement of credit policy.
- Final step is to restrict or disconnect actual services to the consumer, with clear municipal input via the customer care and debt collecting policies.

8. CUSTOMER CARE SERVICE CHARTER.

The charter is binding on all employees and Councillors associated with the Municipality. Staff shall therefore:

- At all times be accessible to members of the public;
- At all times conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner and promote the image of the Municipality;
- Shall strive to be professional in approach when dealing with members of the public.
- Shall serve and execute their duties with due diligence and honesty.
- Shall strive to be resourceful in giving information to the public and such information shall be accurate and up-to-date about the services provided and who is entitled to it.
- Shall not unduly disclose information privileged to the municipality to outside parties without prior approval.
- Shall at all times be friendly, polite and professional when answering telephone calls.
- Shall be willing to take messages should a client wish to speak to a specific official who might not be readily available and ensure that the relevant official receives such message and which are accurately conveyed.

- Shall confirm telephonic discussions should the matter necessitate that it be confirmed in writing.
- Shall respond to telephonic enquiries promptly and make follow-ups when management had undertaken to respond at a later stage.
- Shall answer telephone calls primarily in English, however, should a client wish to be addressed in any of the official languages, the request will be respected.
- Be prompt in response on correspondence requiring written response, reasonably within five working days.
- Shall treat all members of public equally, without distinction of race, religion, gender or social orientation.
- Shall observe official working hours in order not to prejudice or inconvenience members of the public.
- Shall honour all bona fide contractual obligations entered into on behalf of the District Municipality.
- Shall, upon enquiry by a member of the public, furnish information regarding the status of projects executed by the Municipality.
- Shall at all times observe the Code of Conduct for employees as contemplated in Schedule 2 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000.

9. WARD COUNCILLOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Ward Councillors plays a vital role in the current dispensation to communicate the expectations of consumers in a specific ward to Council as well as the services departments or units. The Ward Councillor is also directly responsible to ensure that communication is forwarded to consumers in respect of this policy and to further ensure that consumers are paying for services received. The Councillors will actively promote payment of services rendered to the consumers in their respective wards and strive to create a culture of payment for services through ward committee members.