



UMZIMVUBU
— LOCAL MUNICIPALITY —

Customer Care Policy

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1. DEFINITIONS

In this policy: -

“Accounting officer” - means the Municipal Manager

“Chief Financial Officer” - means a person designated in terms of section 80(2) (a) of the Municipal Finance Management Act No.56 of 2003

“Consumer” - means any end user who receives services from an institution, including an end user in an informal settlement as well as consumers receiving electricity from the municipality

“Councilor” - means a member of a municipal council

“Indigent” - means an indigent household whose total household income is less than such an amount as determined by Council annually during the budget process

“Local community” has the meaning assigned to it in section 1 of the Municipal Systems Act

“Municipal council” or **“council”** - means the council of a municipality referred to in section 18 of the Municipal Structures Act

“Municipality” – means:

(a) When referred to as a corporate body, means a municipality as described in section 2 of the Municipal Systems Act; or

(b) When referred to as a geographic area, means a municipal area determined in terms of the Local Government: Municipal Demarcation Act, 1998 (Act No. 27 of 1998)

“Municipal Manager” - means a person appointed in terms of section 82(1)(a) or (b) of the Municipal Structures Act

“Municipal service” has the meaning assigned to it in section 1 of the Municipal Systems Act

“Municipal Structures Act” - means the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No. 117 of 1998)

“Municipal Finance Management Act” – means the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act No.56 of 2003

“Municipal Systems Act” - means the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000)

“Municipal tariff” - means a tariff for services which a municipality may set for the provision of a service to the local community, and includes a surcharge on such tariff

“Official” – means:

- (a) An employee of a municipality or municipal entity;
- (b) A person seconded to a municipality or municipal entity to work as a member of the staff of the municipality or municipal entity; or
- (c) A person contracted by a municipality or municipal entity to work as a member of the staff of the municipality or municipal entity otherwise than as an employee

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 As a service oriented public entity, Umzimvubu Municipality is committed to ensuring customer service excellence is integral to planning, resourcing and delivery of all council services.
- 2.2 The Customer Care Policy aims to ensure that all sections of the community – including those with special needs – are not excluded from any area of service delivery.
- 2.3 Umzimvubu Municipality aims to ensure that the public receive a consistently excellent standard of customer service as an important tier of Government's resolve to better the lives of its communities.

3. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

- 3.1 To provide quality service to all stakeholders interacting with the Municipality, i.e. public service providers, contractors, fellow staff members in every department and other Government agencies.
- 3.2 To ensure that customers are provided with relevant information as and when is needed in the appropriate format.
- 3.3 To ensure customer complaints are addressed promptly, timeously and to the full satisfaction of the client.
- 3.4 To ensure that customers, both internal and external to the Municipality receive consistent and fair treatment at all times.
- 3.5 To reduce the financial and time cost incurred arising from poor customer service due to repeat calls from and to customers.
- 3.6 To equip municipal staff with knowledge and competencies to continually enhance the service standards according to changing customer needs.

4. SCOPE

- 4.1 This Policy applies to all staff and managers in all departments and sections ward councillors and ward committee members within the Umzimvubu Municipality.
- 4.2 Umzimvubu Municipality aims to maintain an environment where:
 - a) Both the public and members of staff feel valued;
 - b) Staff workloads are managed effectively resulting in efficient service delivery; and
 - c) Services can be tailored to the needs of customers – internal and external based on their feedback.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

- 5.1 This Customer Care Policy defines the aims and objectives of Batho Pele Principles by focusing on:

- a) Consultation;
- b) Service standards;
- c) Courtesy;
- d) Information;
- e) Openness;
- f) Redress;
- g) Value for money; and
- h) Transparency

5.2 Additionally, the Municipality will ensure that the strategy is delivered to a standard that is cost effective, quality driven, user friendly and efficient. This will be done in a way that is inclusive and addresses the needs of the residents through:

- a) A council-wide approach to customer service; and
- b) Standards that apply to all aspects of the council including customers, support staff, partners and contractors.

6. STANDARDS AND VALUES

6.1 The key objective is to ensure consistency in our customer service by:

- a) Providing a standard that is simple and user friendly.
- b) Providing a documented framework and guidelines.
- c) Ensuring that standards are applied across the council and can be adopted by our partners where services are delivered jointly

6.2 All council employees in all departments should adhere to the following customer service standards.

- a) Acknowledge receipt of enquiries within two working days and respond within five working days and acknowledge 100% of e-mail enquiries within one working day.
- b) Acknowledge receipt of formal complaints within two working days and respond within five working days.
- c) Answer 100% of telephone calls across the council within 5 seconds (5 rings)
- d) Provide information about services in all languages other than English.
- e) Show empathy when addressing any special needs of clients
- f) Ensure, where necessary that all buildings are accessible for disabled people
- g) Involve the community in the process of developing – employ an outside – in approach as a basis for enhancing customer services
- h) Aim at providing a service that is fair to all
- i) Project a customer-friendly gesture at all times

7. CUSTOMER INTERACTION

7.1 Face-to-face contact

- a) Customers will be greeted in a polite and courteous manner

- b) Staff will always give their full attention to the customer
- c) Wherever possible, staff will aim to resolve the customer's query/enquiry at first contact
- d) Staff meeting with customers at the first point of contact will ensure adequate information regarding the customer enquiry is obtained, but at the same time ensure confidentiality especially when dealing with sensitive enquiries in a busy reception area e.g. benefits applications, arrears, arrangements etc.
- e) Staff at the first point of contact will give customers the option of seeing specialist members of staff, either in an interview room or in an open reception area
- f) At first contact, staff will aim to ensure that customers are not left unattended for more than five minutes in the reception area or in an interview room without providing an update on issues or progress, either directly or via a colleague. If staff is unavailable, the customer should be made aware of the possible waiting time.

7.2 Waiting period

- a) After initial contact, customers will be given an indication of how long they can be expected to wait.
- b) If waiting times are to exceed 10 minutes, customer services staff must inform the customers

7.3 Telephone calls

- a) Staff will aim to answer telephone calls within 5 seconds or after 5 rings, whichever is greater
- b) Calls in departments and sections should be answered with a greeting – Department/ Section name – surname or first name
- c) Calls at satellite offices should be answered with a greeting – name of satellite office – official's surname or name
- d) Telephones will be attended during published office hours, if staff are away from their desks, phones should be diverted to another person / section or a message should be taken. Customers should never be left with an impression that they cannot be assisted.
- e) In cases where staff requires phoning the customer, they will have to establish when it would be convenient or arrange another time and keep the appointment. The switch board should never be used for this purpose.
- f) If a call is put on hold, the customer must be told why this is happening and kept updated if the waiting time is longer than expected
- g) Answer phones and voicemail may be used to ensure that telephone calls are answered. These will allow the customer to contact an alternative number or will give the caller an option to leave a message.
- h) All council messages must be responded to within the next working day if the message is left over a weekend, after hours or on a public holiday. Wherever possible, the use of voicemail should be avoided

7.4 Written correspondence

- a) Incoming written correspondence (letters, fax or e-mail) will be acknowledged within two working days (at maximum) and responded to within five working days (at maximum)
- b) Receipt of e-mail will be acknowledged within two working day
- c) The presentation and content of any written correspondence must be clear, easy to understand, accurate and include a contact name and number.
- d) All issues raised by the customer will be acknowledged and responded to within the correspondence.

7.5 Complaints procedure

- a) Staff will aim to resolve all concerns raised by customers
- b) Staff will inform the customer that if the resolution is not to their satisfaction, they may lodge a formal complaint and explain how to do this.
- c) Customers should have an acknowledgement of their complaint within two working days and a full written response within five working days
- d) Departmental and sectional heads will analyse the complaints about services in their respective departments/sections and take remedial action so that the problem does not re-occur.

8. PUBLICATIONS

The following information will be available in council publications:

- a) Standard of service against targets
- b) Progress on projects undertaken by the municipality
- c) Changes made to services as a result of complaints, feedbacks or consultations with relevant stakeholders

9. SUGGESTIONS

- a) Customers, partners and staff will be encouraged to make suggestions through a suggestion book located at the reception area.
- b) Additionally the council will inform the customers of any changes made to services as a result of their suggestions.
- c) Suggestions and complaints should be acknowledged within two working days of receipt
- d) Suggestions and complaints should be addressed within five working days after acknowledgement
- e) Where concerns could not be addressed, customers should be given valid reasons

10. CUSTOMER SAFETY AND HEALTH

- a) All customers visiting council buildings will be provided with a safe environment
- b) Where possible, buildings which receive members of the public will have designated member of staff responsible for health and safety

- c) The council shall at all times comply with the health and safety guidelines as espoused in the Occupational Health Safety Act (OHSA) No. 85 of 1993

11. STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Municipality shall ensure that staff receives continuous training to enable them to satisfy customer expectations and keep their skills up- to- date

12. STAFF PRESENTATION

- a) Where appropriate, staff will be neatly dressed when meeting members of the public
- b) Where appropriate, staff will wear badges with their names

13. BUILDINGS AND SIGNAGE

- a) Municipal buildings will be clearly signed internally and externally
- b) Reception points will be welcoming, kept neat and tidy
- c) Reception points will clearly display operating hours (times)
- d) Details of services and personnel available will be displayed clearly in all reception areas

14. INFORMATION/COMMUNICATION

- a) Information for the public will be clear and reviewed regularly
- b) Publicised information will be accessible to customers with specific needs and in line with the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) No. 2 of 2000
- c) Information to the public and other stake holders will be sent timeously.
- d) The municipality will ensure that customers have easy access to information about;
 - Opening times
 - Offices and addresses
 - Names of Managers
 - Facilities / Services available
 - Access details
 - Means by which contact can be made
 - Out of hours contact details

15. STAFF CONDUCT, AWARENESS AND SAFETY

- a) Staff working at information centres (IC) must arrive on time and should never leave their centres unattended. Timeous permission should be sought from the immediate supervisor if a staff member wishes to leave an information centre for whatever reason. The necessary disciplinary procedures shall be proffered against any staff member violating this clause.
- b) Staff shall be courteous and polite and expect to be treated in the same way by customers
- c) In cases of extended disputes, frontline staff must seek assistance from their immediate supervisors who will liaise with the immediate manager

- d) The municipality will ensure that procedures are in place to safe-guard staff from both verbal and physical attacks
- e) Where such attacks are made to staff, action – legal action or otherwise will be taken
- f) Staff shall at all times dress appropriately with their name tags for ease of identification by customers
- g) At no stage should staff, while at the information centres answer cellphones as they are believed to be private

16. CUSTOMER INFORMATION PROVISION

- a) Stored information will be made available in accordance with the Promotion of Access to Information Act No. 2 of 2000
- b) All communication will be clearly identified as Umzimvubu Municipality with author, current date and any reference numbers
- c) Umzimvubu Municipality will also promote electronic service delivery to provide customers with information

17. PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- a) This policy will be reviewed every year to accommodate changing clients' preferences
- b) The Municipality will ensure that there are systems and processes in place to monitor and evaluate performance against set standards
- c) Information will be collected from internal staff, service providers and the general public to obtain inputs for improving service delivery

18. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy comes in effect on date of approval.