



THABA CHWEU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING POLICY

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1. BACKGROUND

Communication at Thaba Chweu Local Municipality (TCLM) is an integral part of its leaders' philosophy and they believe that the promotion of dialogue and interaction contributes to an organisation's success. In this context, dialogue means two-way interaction and sharing of information between equal parties. Through communication, relationships with citizens and "role players" are nurtured; thereby improving the understanding of community needs and enabling the Municipality to respond accordingly.

The TCLM realised the lack and urgent need for a communication policy in its policy and procedural framework. To this end, hence the necessity of this policy to, among others, centralizes the current communication processes to enable TCLM's spoke persons to communicate similar messages internally and externally about the TCLM's issues and affairs.

Also a need was identified to utilise the communication policy as an item of the induction process for new entrants in the institution to instil, for instance, the principle of confidentiality on internal classified information as well as to serve as a deterrent against misuse of the TCM communication delivery channels.

As part of its organisational culture, the TCM is also committed to a developmental communication approach in providing information to communities which will assist in its socio-economic development and upliftment, and in ensuring that the voices of the communities are heard and consulted in the decision-making process of Council.

2. PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNICATION POLICY

The aim of the Communication Policy is:

- To enunciate explicit guidelines for communication in the TCM underpinned by its vision, mission, principles and values system,
- To encourage a culture of community participation in governance and to improve the Council's public image,
- To outline the divergent communication roles and responsibilities of the TCM's spokespersons and,
- To ensure that communication is undertaken in a coordinated and circumspect manner by the spoke persons.

3. UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

Notwithstanding the fact that this Policy is in consonance with the TCM's Vision, Mission and Pledge, the following fundamental principles are central to the Policy philosophy. Therefore, also emanating from the above stated aim, these principles are supportive of the Communication Policy.

3.1 Batho Pele Principles

The Batho Pele Principles are a given for all levels of government supported by the new Belief Set of Government, namely:

“We belong, We care, We serve.”

The new Belief Set encourages a spirit, culture and practice of collaboration, teamwork and collegiality among all public servants thereby fostering effective intergovernmental relations, communication and public service.

3.2 Governance

The second principle is ensuring *governance*. In terms of the national definition of governance, the TCLM is required to govern with, rather than for people. Thus Council is to be viewed as a facilitating body and not a governing body. For this to be achieved, dialogue between Council 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 communities.

3.3 Participation

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

3.4 Citizen

Citizen, being the fourth principle, allows for a broad definition of role-players and stakeholders. The term includes the internal, that is, Councillors, officials and municipal trade unions and external public, that is, individuals or organisations operating outside Council, for instance, ward committees, delegations, business, NGOs, etc. This Policy should enable Council to interact with all role-players in an efficient and effective manner to ensure that TCLM's communities are adequately informed.

3.5 Promotion of Thaba Chweu Culture

The fifth principle refers to the manner in which communication occurs. It is envisaged that communication, involvement and interaction become a *culture* within the Council. In this context culture means that the necessity and importance of communication is recognised and is an integral part of Council's philosophy and daily 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 but facilitated to develop and evolve within the organisation and its officials spontaneously.

3.6 Promotion of Thaba Chweu Public Image

The last principle being *public image* is an important factor for successful communication. Image refers to the public perception of Council and may either attract or deter citizen 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 Council's image will be improved through communication.

4. APPLICATION AND AUTHORITY

The application and authority of the Policy within the TCLM shall devolve as follows.

- The Policy is applicable to all Staff and Councillors of the TCLM,
- The authority to communicate is the integral duty of the Executive Mayor as assisted by the Municipal Manager and the Communications Manager,
- Heads of Department should ensure compliance with the Policy within their respective departments,
- However, the Communications Unit is responsible for the operational communication function of the TCLM in terms of coordination, monitoring and ensuring overall compliance with the Policy,
- The Policy needs to be reviewed and updated as informed by the IDP strategic goals and imperatives.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

This Policy will endeavour to promote fair, equitable, accurate, timeous and transparent communications. Improve and sustain good working relations with both internal and external stakeholders.

This will be achieved through the following dimensions of the Policy:

5.1 Language Policy

In cognisance to the National Policy Framework, the Council has determined that the business language of the TCLM is English. However, simple and well understood language must be used in all communication with the public to ensure clarity and consistency of information.

- Official correspondence or documents for circulation to communities could be translated into a predominantly spoken language as per request.
- Language choice can be used for informal communication.

- As prescribed in the Municipal Systems Act No 32 of 2000 Chapter 4, the municipality must take into consideration the language preference and usage in the municipality and the special needs of people who cannot read and write. Similarly, cognizance should be taken of the special needs of disabled persons, especially in public meetings.
- Also as prescribed by the Promotion of Access to Information Act, the TCLM is obliged to translate an official document into the preferred language of choice of the applicant at a cost.

5.2 Corporate Identity

The Municipal Manager in collaboration with the Communication Manager is responsible for the overall corporate identity of the TCM. However, from an operational perspective each and every Director is responsible for his/her department in respect of the following:

- The hospitality of the departments' office buildings;
- The type and the way communication material is produced and utilised;
- The Coat of Arms is the official TCLM logo with the name of the Thaba Chweu Municipality written in full;
- The Coat of Arms is to be used on official documents and displayed during events only in terms of branding protocol.
- The Vision and Mission of TCLM will also be used in publications, brochures and corporate promotional material for the benefit of the municipality.

Before strategies to improve or amend the image of the organisation can be developed and formulated, the current image should be determined. Through a "perception survey" both the external and internal image of the organisation can be assessed. These studies will not only identify the existing image but also determine the attitudes and perceptions of citizens and personnel. Regular perception surveys should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of communication.

5.3 Reflecting Diversity

The TCLM's communication material should be sensitive to the diverse nature of the municipality in terms of differences among and within the communities and wards. To this end, the TCLM must ensure a balance approach in its communication repertoires to cater for the needs and interests of its citizens and special population groups.

5.4 Publications

The TCLM Communication Unit carries the responsibility to produce and distribute the Council's newsletter in consultation with the Municipal Manager. The Policy mandates the development of guidelines to address editorial issues such as fairness, accuracy, sign-off of content and adherence to

corporate identity, for instance, coordinating all TCLM publications prior to printing and distribution.

5.5 Branding and Promotional Material

All official promotional material is to bear the TCLM Coat of Arms to enhance the corporate identity and image. This is in line with the TCLM branding strategy.

The communities of the TCLM, in consultation with the Communication Unit, are encouraged to utilize the marketing logo to assist with branding the Municipality and to promote tourism and investment.

5.6 Public Participation

The concept of governance requires Council to be more transparent and democratic in its communication. Effective communication is an essential component of governance, it is therefore critical that Council improves its communication efforts through promotion and practice of public participation. To this end, the Communication Unit, in consultation with the Municipal Manager and Executive Mayor, is responsible for ensuring that communities are mobilized to attend community meetings such as izimbizo, road shows, project launches and information sharing days, etc. In this way a data base of information needs is built up and thus allows that the correct information is channelled to the target audiences in the most cost effective and efficient manner.

5.7 Risk Communications

It is incumbent on the Council to anticipate and assess potential risks to public health and safety and the environment so that policy documents and programme administration can be utilised to deal with the risks. The Council should devise plans and strategies for effectively communicating risk to the public. .Effective risk management requires open and transparent communication and being sensitive to all opinions and concerns of the public.

In this regard the Council will endeavour to:

- Foster open dialogue with the public on issues involving risk, and build a climate of trust, credibility and understanding;
- Facilitate an interactive exchange of information on risk –related factors among interested parties inside and outside the Municipality;
- Respond to public perceptions and provide factual information to address misconceptions or misunderstandings about risk.

The Policy in this regard takes cognizance of the Council's *Disaster Management Policy* pertinent to its vision and directives, namely, "to be a disaster free environment, with fewer or no emergencies in the Thaba Chweu Municipality."

5.8 Communication in a Crisis Situation

A crisis like an accident can beset any organisation without anticipation. However, a plan needs to be in place to deal with this eventuality.

The TCLM will consider these guidelines in the event of a crisis.

- The existence of a crisis should be brought to the attention of management as a matter of urgency;
- In response, a communication crisis committee may be established consisting of senior management and the Communication Manager to strategise and deal with the crisis;
- A plan of action is to be drafted;
- The crisis will then be managed and communication thereof will be released in consultation with the Executive Mayor.

5.9 Management and Coordination

The Policy will take cognizance of the various communication structures that assist in coordinating communication activities across the diverse spheres of Government. The relevant communication structures aligned to local government communication are:

- Provincial Communicators Forum (PCF), (Chaired from the Premier's Office, Communications Directorate).
- District Communicators Forum (DCF), (Chaired by the Head of Communication of the District Municipality).
- Local Communicators Forum (LCF), (Chaired by the Communications Manager of the Local Municipality).
- And also the Community Development Workers (CDWs) operating within the Municipality.

Relevant communication is therefore, cascaded down from the PCF to the DCF, LCF and CDWs and vice versa. The forums serve the purpose of coordinating programmes and projects and sharing best practice. They also serve to monitor and evaluate the activities of the various communication structures.

The Executive Mayor, Municipal Manager and the Communication Unit are responsible for strategising on the annual communication goals, priorities and activities in consultation with all stakeholders.

5.10 Environmental Analysis

The Policy recognizes the crucial role of research to assess the needs, perceptions and attitudes of all stakeholders. Research will inform management on best communication practices to be applied in any given situation.

Council is required to routinely monitor and analyze the public environment as it relates to its policies, programmes, services and initiatives and to identify and track current and emerging public issues and trends reported on by the media. These may be employee or customer satisfaction surveys and media monitoring and press clippings. The office of the Speaker will particularly play a visible role in analyzing the political stability and community needs through Public Participation Programmes.

5.11 Event Management

The policy will also address integration and coordination across the three spheres of Government and promote partnerships with regard to competition and duplication of events. The Council in compliance should develop and adopt its annual calendar of events and submit to the DCF and subsequently to the PCF. The calendar of events will also be updated on a monthly basis on the website and intranet.

The Heads of Department should plan their projects or events in consultation with the Communication Unit for purposes of coordination, advice and assistance where necessary.

5.12 Advertising and Marketing

The Communication Unit should coordinate all advertising and marketing initiatives of the Council in collaboration with the Municipal Manager. Advertising and marketing plans and guidelines should be developed to serve as a blue print also to promote tourism and investment. Information education and service delivery issues should take priority and political leaders should be seen as messengers of service delivery.

5.13 Internal and External Communications

The Policy mandates that all communications should be designed to reflect relevant, timeous, and accurate information to its internal and external stakeholders. The Communication Unit is the driving force for generation and coordination of all forms of communication in the Municipality.

Internal Communications

- The critical objective of internal communication is to facilitate information flow within the Municipality in order to create an informed workforce;
- It involves information about Municipal services, human resources information: policies and procedures, information on government rules and regulations and programmes, and other useful information to staff, work related information and newsletter, etc.
- It is management's responsibility to keep staff informed of strategic issues at departmental meetings and to ensure realignment of staff's *performance* with *organisational culture* through, inter alia, consistent

communicating the vital link between the Council's vision, mission, pledge and values and the staff's daily operations.

External Communications

- The main purpose of external communication is to inform stakeholders and communities of the Municipality's Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), progress, successes, challenges, and policies.
- It is vital to promote two-way communication; it is in this regard where *community participation* is fundamental.
- It is also important to have a thorough understanding of which communication tools to use for various target groups in the communities.

5.14 Media Relations

The Communication Manager and Communication Unit are the Municipality's first line of contact with the media and are responsible for coordinating all media relations. In an effort to improve the dissemination of information, Council should improve and strengthen its interaction and relations with the media. Remember the media can *make you or break you!*

- All media enquiries should be directed to the Communication Unit and responses thereof should be in writing, if possible, signed off by the Executive Mayor or the Municipal Manager except for radio and television interviews.
- The Code of Conduct, Schedule 2 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000, stipulates that an employee may not without permission disclose any privilege or confidential information of the municipality to an unauthorised person.
- Alternatively, an employee may not use privilege or confidential information for private gain or to improperly benefit another person.
- The Code of Conduct, Schedule 2 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 should similarly apply to all Councillors in terms of exercising circumspect communication internally and externally on Council's issues and matters.

5.15 Spokes Persons and Accountability

In compliance to Government policy and to ensure effective communications, the following are the designated spokespersons of the Municipality.

- **Executive Mayor**
The Executive Mayor is the chief communicator and he/she can delegate this responsibility to the Municipal Manager, Heads of Department or the Communication Manager. The Executive Mayor may delegate the Councillors to speak on municipal matter at official events and promotions in accordance with their portfolio.
- **Municipal Manager**

The Municipal Manager serves as the chief communicator in the absence of the Executive Mayor only on operational or administrative issues. The responsibility can be delegated to Heads of Departments or the Communications Manager wherever necessary. Conversely, the Speaker will communicate political matters in the absence of the Executive Mayor.

- **Heads of Department**
Heads of Department can communicate matters within their jurisdiction as delegated by the Executive Mayor or the Municipal Manager. However, The Communication Unit must ensure the centralisation and coordination of messages being disseminated to the media.
- **Communication Manager**
The Communication Manager is the official spokesperson and is responsible for drafting media statements, media liaison, acting as the media spokesperson on behalf of the Executive Mayor and the Municipality.

5.16 Communication Delivery Channels

For its internal and external communications, the Council will utilise the following communication delivery channels:

Internal Communications

- Meetings
- Workshops
- Memorandum
- Intranet
- Newsletter
- Notice Boards and Electronic
- Posters
- Exhibitions
- Road shows
- Telephone, cell phone, etc.

External Communications

- Izimbizo
- Radio
- Television
- Newsletter
- Brochures, flyers
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Road shows

- Conferences, summits, workshops
- Website
- Telephone, cell phone etc.

5.17 Promotion of Access to Information

Pertinent to the Promotion of Access to Information Act, (PAIA) the Municipality will avail important information to its personnel and stakeholders through the Communication Unit as and when necessary.

This policy should be read in tandem with the Thaba Chweu Municipality's Information Technology Policy for further clarification of the usage of the Council's communication channels such as emails and telephones.

5.18 Non- Adherence /Deviance from Policy

Should any member of council, employee or community member deviate from the policy, they shall be guilty of an offence and the necessary disciplinary procedures shall be followed to prosecute them.