



ILEMBE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

2020-2021

CUSTOMER CARE AND MANAGEMENT POLICY

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1. PURPOSE

1.1. Section 95 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, no 32 of 2000 (hereinafter referred to as the MSA) requires the Municipality to:

- 1.1.1. establish a sound customer management system;
- 1.1.2. establish mechanisms for users of services and ratepayers to give feedback to the municipality regarding the quality of services;
- 1.1.3. Take reasonable steps to ensure that users of services are informed of the costs of service provision, the reason for the payment of service fees, and the manner in which monies are utilised;
- 1.1.4 Take reasonable steps to ensure the accurate measurement of consumption of services;
- 1.1.5 Ensure the receipt by persons liable for payments of regular and accurate accounts that indicate the basis for calculating the amounts due;
- 1.1.6 Provide accessible mechanisms for those persons to query or verify accounts and metered consumption, and appeal procedures which allow for prompt redress for inaccurate accounts;
- 1.1.7 Provide accessible mechanisms for dealing with complaints, prompt replies and corrective action;
- 1.1.8 Provide mechanisms to monitor response times to such complaints;
- 1.1.9 Provide accessible pay points and other mechanisms for settling accounts or for making pre-payments for services.

1.1.10 VALUES

In order to achieve Customer Service Excellence it is necessary that our front line staff have a common set of values that will guide their interaction with customers. As an organization, iLembe District Municipality will remind our staff that there must be commitment to the following Values that will guide our interactions with customers:

- Respect (we Value our relationship with Customers)
- Good Customer Care
- Service Excellence
- Integrity & Professionalism
- Mutual trust & understanding

These Values will be the cornerstone of our customer focused approach.

2. DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

- 2.1. Unless the context clearly requires a different interpretation, any word or expression which has been defined in the By-law shall bear the same definition when used in this policy;
- 2.2. Unless the context clearly requires a different interpretation:
 - 2.2.1. "The MSA" shall mean the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000;
 - 2.2.2. "The By-law" shall mean the Municipality's By-law which has been adopted in pursuant to Section 98 of the MSA to give effect to this policy;
 - 2.2.3. "Centre" shall mean the Customer Care Centre established in accordance with this policy;
 - 2.2.4. "Customer Care Centre" shall mean enquiries desk and call centre;
 - 2.2.5. "Council" shall mean the Council of the Ilembe District Municipality;
 - 2.2.6. "Customer" shall mean any person to whom the Municipality supplies services;
 - 2.2.7. "The municipality" shall mean the Ilembe District Municipality.

3. CUSTOMER CARE

Through this policy the municipality's aim is to ensure that a customer will be able to contact the municipality conveniently and will be treated courteously, promptly and fairly. The customer will receive a clear response to any service request or enquiry within a stated period of time as defined in Section 7 of this policy.

3.1. CUSTOMER CARE CENTRE

The municipality shall endeavour to establish a Customer Care Centre which shall create a positive and reciprocal relationship between customers liable for payments and the municipality.

- 3.1.1 In particular, the Centre shall:
 - 3.1.1.1 Serve as the conduit for receiving feedback regarding the quality of services, and to this end, shall receive, process, analyse and report to the Chief Financial Officer on such feedback;
 - 3.1.1.2 Provide information to customers on the costs involved in service provision, the reasons for the payment of service fees, and the manner in which monies raised from services are utilised;
 - 3.1.1.3 Serve as the point at which queries regarding accounts may be submitted and shall deal with such queries;

3.1.1.4 Serve as the point at which complaints may be submitted, and shall respond to such complaints.

3.1.2 The Centre shall be housed in an appropriate location and shall be properly equipped to deal with the matters referred to in 3.1.1 telephonically, by mail, e-mail and directly with the public.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

The Municipality shall promote communications and feedback channels as follows:

- 4.1. Copies of this policy may be obtained from the Municipality at a cost determined by the Council from time to time and will be made available by general publication and on specific request, and will also be available for perusal at the municipality's offices and the official web site.
- 4.2. The municipality will endeavour to distribute regular information regarding customer care and debt collection issues.
- 4.3. Ward councillors will be required to hold regular ward meetings, at which customer care and debt collection issues will be given prominence.
- 4.4. The press will be encouraged to give prominence to the municipality's customer care and debt collection issues, and will be invited to Council or Committee meetings where these are discussed.
- 4.5. In particular, the mechanisms referred to in 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 shall be used to convey to customers information relating to the costs involved in service provision, and how funds received for the payment of services are utilised, and may where necessary employ the services of local media to convey such information.

5. METERING

- 5.1. The Municipality will endeavour to ensure that meters are read monthly, and as close to the same date as is practical in each month.
- 5.2. The municipality shall ensure that meters accurately record consumption.
- 5.3. If a meter is not read in any month, the municipality will estimate the consumption for the month in question, and to that end, where possible, it will base its estimate on the average consumption for the six preceding months. Where the next account based on an actual reading results in a need to adjust account for any excess amount or shortfall in the estimated account such adjustment will be done in the following month.

- 5.4. In the event that there the account was estimated then the water and sanitation charges shall be adjusted when the accurate and actual reading is obtained.
- 5.5. Customers may request verification of meter readings.
- 5.6. Where a customer is still not satisfied with consumption raised, after verification of meter readings, they can request for meter testing upon paying the relevant fees in terms of the municipality's tariff of charges.
- 5.7. In the event of a smart/intelligent meter being installed, the municipality is to ensure that the smart meter records consumption accurately and to make sure that the meter is in working condition in order to accurately render sewerage billing where applicable.
- 5.8. In the event that the meter is a "works order" meter or if the consumer feels that the meter is incorrectly recording or decreasing consumption, then the consumer can through the customer service centre or enquiries unit lodge a query and a technician be assigned to that query within 24 hours for an inspection to take place.
- 5.9. Customer has the right to be educated on the smart/intelligent metering operations.
- 5.10. All new application for services will be in the form of conventional metering in line with the Credit Control and Debt Collection policy.
- 5.11. All adjustments pertaining to incorrect charges would be adjusted going back a period of 3 Financial years inclusive of the year in which the adjustment is taking place

6. ACCOUNTS AND BILLING

- 6.1. Customers will receive accounts on a monthly basis for services supplied and for basic charges.
- 6.2. If a consumer is on prepaid metering, then NO basic charges shall be billed but only sanitation charges not limited to areas where sanitation services are rendered.
- 6.3. Where applicable and possible all the services supplied to a property the account shall be consolidated to for all such services.
- 6.4. All accounts shall reflect how the amount thereof is made up and calculated, and shall include, where applicable, an indication of the units consumed.
- 6.5. Accounts shall be understandable and accurate.
- 6.6. The due date for payment shall be indicated on each account.
- 6.7. Accounts shall be sent to the address of the customer last recorded with the Municipality in whichever manner that the consumer deems fit, limited to SMS, MMS, Email, and Posting.
- 6.8. Changes to customer personal details shall be done upon written request or information received by municipality during any data cleansing exercise.

6.9. Such changes are to be carried out, a duly authorized official from the Finance Department only but only after compliance with 6.8 above.

7. QUERIES AND APPEALS

- 7.1. A customer who believes that any account incorrectly reflects the amount owed by him or her may lodge a query regarding such account with the Centre.
- 7.2. Such query must be in writing and must specify the nature of the query and the manner and extent to which the customer believes the amount stated in the account differs from that actually owed, and the basis for such belief.
- 7.3. Such query must be lodged before the due date for payment of the account.
- 7.4. Such query must be accompanied by the payment of the average of the last three months' accounts where history of the account is available or an estimated amount provided by the municipality before payment due date.
- 7.5. Any subsequent accounts shall become due and payable by due date and any failure to make such payments will render the customer liable for credit control processes.
- 7.6. The centre shall endeavour to resolve the query within 30 days or advise consumer if it takes longer.
- 7.7. The centre will register the query and provide the customer with a reference number. The customer must ensure that a reference number is given for any unresolved query as it serves as proof of having lodged a query for to facilitate follow-ups and escalation of the query if not resolved within stipulated time as per 7.6 above.
- 7.8. For purposes of resolving the query, the Centre must diligently make all necessary inquiries with the relevant departments, and in accordance with the information obtained in the course of such inquiries, shall determine the amount actually payable and shall either:
 - 7.8.1. Confirm the amount stated in the account; or
 - 7.8.2. Accede to the customer's query and adjust the account according to the amount claimed by the customer; or
 - 7.8.3. Partially accede to the customer's query and adjust the account by a different amount.
- 7.9. Should the customer not be satisfied with the determination of the Centre, he or she may appeal to the Municipal Manager or Enquiries Task Team against such determination.
- 7.10. Such appeal must be made in writing and lodged with the municipality within 21 (twenty-one) days after the notification of the Centre's determination, and must:

- 7.10.1. Set out the reasons for the appeal; and
- 7.10.2. Be accompanied by any security determined for the testing of a measuring device, if applicable.
- 7.11. Upon receipt of the appeal, the Municipal Manager shall make such inquiries considered necessary and endeavour to determine the amount actually owed within 30 (thirty) days of the appeal being made.
- 7.12. In accordance with such determination the Municipal Manager or Enquiries Task Team shall:
 - 7.12.1. Confirm the amount stated in the account; or
 - 7.12.2. Accede to the customer's appeal and adjust the account according to the amount claimed by the customer; or
 - 7.12.3. Partially accede to the customer's appeal and adjust the account by a different amount.
- 7.13. The determination of the Municipal Manager or Enquiries Task Team shall be final and binding, subject, however, to the outcome of any court proceedings instituted by or against the customer in respect of the disputed amount.
- 7.14. The customer shall be notified in writing of any determination of the Centre or the Municipal Manager or Enquiries Task Team.
- 7.15. A customer has a right to request for a reference number for their query and also details of whom is handling the consumers query.
- 7.16. If the consumer is not satisfied, then the query can be lodged with a more senior official.

8. SERVICE COMPLAINTS

8.1 Quality of Service at the Centre

- 8.1.1. Should a customer have any complaint about any service rendered by the Municipality, he or she may lodge such complaint in writing, setting out full particulars of the complaint at the Centre.
- 8.2. The centre shall investigate the matter and if it finds that the complaint is justified, shall propose such remedial action as in the circumstances is reasonable and practical to apply.
- 8.3. Such remedial action shall, however, be ratified by the Municipal Manager before it is implemented.
- 8.4. The response time and efficiency in dealing with any complaint shall be monitored by Chief Financial Officer.

- 8.5. Every effort must be made to resolve any complaint in the shortest possible time.
- 8.6. The customer shall be notified in writing of the outcome of any investigation and any remedial action ratified by the Municipal Manager.

9. PAYMENT FACILITIES

- 9.1. The municipality has established the following accessible pay points and other mechanisms for settling accounts:
- 9.1.1. Cashier desks at the following Municipality's offices:
- 9.1.1.1. Ilembe House
 - 9.1.1.2. Mandeni
 - 9.1.1.3. Sundumbili
 - 9.1.1.4. Ndwendwe Central
 - 9.1.1.5. Maphumulo Office
 - 9.1.1.6. Bamshela Office
- 9.1.2. Credit and Debit Card Facilities at the following Municipality's offices:
- 9.1.2.1. Ilembe House
 - 9.1.2.2. Mandeni
 - 9.1.2.3. Sundumbili
- 9.1.3 Roving Cashiers at various sites within the municipality
- 9.1.4 Direct deposit to Water Services Bank Account;
- 9.1.5 Third - party payments such as
- 9.1.5.1 Easypay at Checkers, Pick and Pay, Spar
 - 9.1.5.2 Post Office
- 9.2. The Municipality shall give due regard to the demand for and preference of the community for any particular mechanism and the location thereof.
- 9.3. The municipality may in terms of section 103 of the Act:
- 9.3.1. with the consent of a customer approach an employer to secure a debit or stop order arrangement to deduct any amount owed from that persons salary; and
 - 9.3.2. Provide for special incentives as contemplated in section 103 of the Systems Act.

10. OFFICE HOURS

- Finance Services – enquiries – 07h30 to 16h00
- Credit control and customer care – **Saturday** – 08h00 to 13h00
- Customer service call centre – 00h00 to 00h00 – 24 hours

11. POLICY ADOPTION

This policy has been considered and approved by the Council of the ILembe District Municipality on MAY 2020.

This policy shall be effective from 01 July 2020.