



BITOU MUNICIPALITY

LANGUAGE POLICY

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1. DEFINITIONS

In this policy, unless the context otherwise indicates:-

“administration” refers to the administrative arm of the Bitou Municipality;

“Municipality” refers to the Municipality of Bitou (established by Provincial Notice no 592 dated 22 November 2000);

“Committees” refers to the Executive Mayor, Portfolio Committees and any other Committee established by the Council;

“Council” refers to full Council meetings of the Municipal Council of Bitou Municipality;

“formal motion” refers to a written motion submitted to Council for debate in terms of Council’s Rules of Order;

“Province” refers to the Provincial Government of the Western Cape; and

“three official languages” refers to the three languages of the Western Cape, namely Afrikaans, English and IsiXhosa, in terms of Section 5 of the Constitution of the Western Cape.

2. PURPOSE

To give effect to:-

2.1. Section 6 read with sections 30 and 31 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa;

2.2. Sections 18.2 and 21.2 of the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000);

2.3. The principles of Batho Pele as contained in Government Gazette No 18340, dated 1 October 1997;

2.4. The Western Cape Language Policy (PN 369/2001 of 27 November 2001);

3. GOALS

3.1. to take into account the language preferences of local residents in all activities and programmes of the Municipality;

3.2. to promote equal access to municipal services and programmes by removing communication or language barriers;

3.3. to promote multilingualism amongst the Municipality’s staff and communities within

Bitou Municipality;

- 3.4 to promote the use of the three official languages in the affairs of the Municipality;
- 3.5 to give increasing effect to the equal status of the three official languages in the business of the Municipality; and
- 3.6 to provide for sign language as and when necessary in an effort to address the special needs of people with disabilities where practical.

4. POLICY PROVISIONS FOR THE USE OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES BY THE COUNCIL

- 4.1. Any of the three official languages may be used in debates and other proceedings of the Council and its Committees. The Municipality must make provision for interpreter services in the three official languages during sittings of the Council. Similar services must be available for sittings of Committees, when requested by the chairperson of the committee. Sign languages and interpreting services must be provided, upon request, if such services are required due to special needs;
- 4.2. All by-laws must be promulgated in two of the three official languages and be available in the other official language on request;
- 4.3. All new policies adopted by the Council may be in English and must be available in the other two official languages upon request.
- 4.4. A formal motion in the Council or its Committees must be available in all three official languages. The Council may make practical arrangements to cause motions drawn up in one official language, to be made available in the other two official languages within a reasonable time;
- 4.5. Reports (including attachments thereto) submitted to Council and/or committees must be submitted in English. However, the subject headings and recommendations to all reports must be made available in all three official languages, where practically possible;
- 4.6. The English version of a resolution adopted by Council and committees will for all purposes be regarded as the correct version in case of a discrepancy between any of the languages;
- 4.7. The official minutes of Council and committees will be in English and resolutions must be available in the other two languages upon request.
- 4.8. Official notices of all meetings and index to agendas for meetings of Council and committees must be prepared in all three official languages.

5. DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS

All disciplinary hearings must be conducted in any of the three official languages as preferred by the accused. Therefore, translation and interpretation services shall be made available when necessary.

6. OFFICIAL NOTICES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

All official notices and advertisements published by the Municipality, for general public information must be issued in the language of the media concerned or the predominant language being spoken in the relevant area in the case of community papers.

7. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

7.1. Any of the three languages may be used for the purpose of verbal or written communication in the Administration.

7.2. All internal communiqués addressed to all staff members must be in English or Afrikaans and be available in the other two official languages upon request.

7.3 The Municipality must make every effort to ensure compliance with the Language Code of Conduct as set out in paragraph 10.2.

8. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

8.1. Any member of the public may use any of the three official languages or sign language in his/her verbal communication with the Municipality. Written communication may be in any of the three (3) languages.

8.2. All responses to external communication must be in the language in which the original communication was received.

8.3. The Municipality must in its communication with and rendering of services to the public ensure that these are carried out in the most appropriate way to accommodate language preferences with the assistance of interpreters and translators and/or technical means.

8.4. When filling vacant posts, cognizance must be taken of the Municipality's language policy when advertising, recruiting, selecting and appointing staff.

9. IDENTIFICATION SIGNS

9.1 Identification signs in municipal offices or facilities must comply with prescribed national standards with regard to language use; and

- 9.2 In respect of roads signs and directional signs, the language as prescribed by national and provincial legislation pertaining to road signs, must be used. For street names, due consideration must be given to the community's language usage and preferences.

10. IMPLEMENTATION

10.1 Language Services

- 10.1.1 The Municipality must as far as practical, provide capacity for internal translation and interpretation services under the auspices of the Director: Corporate Services;
- 10.1.2 The Municipality must as far as practical, make available translation or interpretation services so that residents can have equal access to municipal services.

10.2 Code of Conduct

- 10.2.1 The Municipality must continuously ensure that councillors and staff members are sensitized to the value of multilingualism as a tool for building social cohesion, promoting economic development and consolidating democratic government through respect for cultural diversity;
- 10.2.2 The Municipality must ensure that notices are placed in all its buildings/offices informing the public that it promotes multilingualism and that officials will make every effort to use the language(s) of the client(s); and
- 10.2.3 The Municipality must ensure that all officials and councillors accommodate the language use and preferences of other officials and councillors with courtesy.

10.3 Development and Education

- 10.3.1 Officials and councillors must be encouraged to learn the three official languages, and training programmes must be organized to assist in the development of their language skills;
- 10.3.2 Departments/section/divisions must play an active role in promoting multilingualism in an equitable manner and also to identify the language skills required in order to render effective and efficient services to its communities; and
- 10.3.3 The Municipality must make provision in its annual Skills Development Plan for the improvement of language proficiency skills and the learning of

new languages of the province.

10.4 Translating and Interpretation Services

The Municipality must make available translation and interpretation services for internal use and at public meetings if and when considered necessary.

10.5 Main/General Telephone Exchanges

The main/general telephone reception of the Municipality must “welcome” its customers in all three official languages. For this purpose, a recorded service may be made available in all three official languages prompting customers according to their language preference.

10.6 Language Preferences

In accordance with section 6(3) (b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, the Municipality shall take into account the language use and preferences of its residents.

11. **FINANCING AND APPLICATION**

The Municipality must budget for language planning, language policy development and implementation, language resources and language training in order to meet the obligations outlined above.

12. **POLICY REVIEW**

The policy review shall be undertaken on an annual basis to accommodate possible changes in the National and Provincial Language Policy framework as influenced by societal changes.