

## CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

### Version Control

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## CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 The Customer care policy aims to ensure that all our staff uphold the ethos of Batho Pele as espoused by South African government.
- 1.3 Mhlontlo Municipality aims to ensure that the public receives a consistently excellent standard of customer service as an important tier of Government's resolve to better the lives of our communities.

## 2. Policy Statement

2.1. As a service-oriented public entity, Mhlontlo Municipality is committed to ensuring customer service excellence is integral to planning, resourcing and delivery of all council services.

2.2. This Customer Care Policy is premised on the undermentioned Batho Pele Principles by focusing on: a. Service Standards

- 2.2.1. Consultation:
- 2.2.2. Courtesy
- 2.2.3. Information
- 2.2.4. Openness
- 2.2.5. Redress
- 2.2.6. Value for money
- 2.2.7. Transparency

2.4. Additionally, we 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 all our residents through:

- 2.4.1. A council-wide approach to Customer Service.
- 2.4.2. Standards that apply to all aspects of the council including internal customers, support staff, partners and contractors.

*Our aim is to put "Batho Pele" in everything we do*

### 3. Legal Requirements

3.1 The guiding principles used in developing the Policy were sourced from the following legislation and policies:

- a) Municipal Finance Management Act
- b) Municipal Structures Act.
- c) Bato Pele Principles

### 4. Purpose and objectives of the Policy

4.1. To provide quality service to all stakeholders interacting with the Municipality – the public, service providers, contractors, fellow staff members in every department and other government agencies.

4.2. To ensure that customers are provided with the relevant information as and when is needed in the appropriate format.

4.3. To ensure customer complaints are addressed promptly, timeously and to the full satisfaction of the client

4.4. To ensure that customers, both internal and external to the Municipality receive a consistent and fair treatment at all times.

4.5. To reduce financial and time costs incurred arising from poor customer service due to repeat calls from and to customers

4.6. To equip our staff with knowledge and competencies to continuously enhance the service standards according to changing customer needs.

### 5. Standards and values

5.1. The key objective is to ensure consistency in our **customer** service by:

5.1.1. Providing a standard that is simple and user friendly.

5.1.2. Providing a documented framework and guidelines.

5.1.3. Developing performance targets which are reviewed regularly and gather feedback from staff, Councillors, our partners and the public.

5.1.4. Ensuring the standards are applied across the council and can be adopted by our partners where services are delivered jointly.

5.2. All council employees in all departments (including Directors and Deputy Directors) must adhere to the following customer service standards:

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- 5.2.1. Acknowledge receipt of enquiries within 3 working days and respond within 10 working days. Acknowledge 100% of enquiry emails within one working day.
- 5.2.2. Acknowledge receipt of formal complaints within three working days and respond within 15 working days.
- 5.2.3. Answer 90% of telephone calls across the council within 15 seconds.
- 5.2.4. Provide information about services in all official languages available within its jurisdiction.
- 5.2.5. Show empathy when addressing any special needs of clients.
- 5.2.6. Ensure, where necessary that all buildings are accessible for disabled people.
- 5.2.7. Involve the community in the process of developing and enhancing our services – employ an outside-in approach as a basis for enhancing customer services
- 5.2.8. Aim to provide a service that treats people fairly.
- 5.2.9. Project a customer-friendly gesture at all times whether you are able to provide the necessary service standards to the client or not.
- 5.2.10. Remember to **ALWAYS** treat customers as **KINGS** because we are public **SERVANTS**

### 6. Scope

6.1. This policy applies to all staff and managers in all departments and sections, Ward Councillors and Ward Committee members within Mhlontlo Municipality.

6.2. We aim 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.
- c. Services can be tailored to the needs of customers - internal and external based on their feedback.
- d. Provide greater customer choice by using electronic service delivery to allow people to access council services at times that suit their lifestyle, while also maintaining existing channels for members of the public who may not have access to technology.

## 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 enquiry at first contact.
- d. We will aim to ensure all customers are catered for and appropriate arrangements are in place,  
e.g. where possible translation facilities and interview rooms.
- e. Staff meeting with customers at the first point of contact will ensure adequate information regarding the customer's enquiry is obtained, but at the same time ensuring confidentiality especially when dealing with sensitive enquiries in a busy reception area, e.g. benefits applications, arrears etc.
- f. Staff at first point of contact will give customers the option of seeing specialist members of staff, either in an interview room, or in the open reception area.
- g. At first contact, staff will aim to ensure that customers are not left unattended for more than five (5) minutes in reception or an interview room without providing an update on issues or progress, either directly or via a colleague. If staff are unavailable the customer should be made aware of the expected waiting time.

### 7.2. Waiting times

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

#### 7.2.1.1. Telephone calls

7.2.1.2. Staff will aim to answer telephone calls within 15 seconds or after 2 rings, whichever is greater.

7.2.1.3. Calls in departments and sections should be answered with:

- a. Good morning / afternoon
- b. Department and name - preferably surname or first name.

7.2.1.4. However, staff in Customer Services or satellite/external offices should answer calls with: *a Good morning / afternoon, the facility/site and their name.*

7.2.1.5. Staff should aim, wherever possible, to resolve the customer's enquiry at first contact.

7.2.1.6. Telephones will be attended during published opening hours. If staff are away from their desk, phones should be diverted to another person / section or a message should be taken. Never leave the customer with the impression that you are "unable to assist him/her"

7.2.1.7. In cases where a customer has a hearing impairment, arrangements can be made via the Customer Services department.

7.2.1.8. If members of staff need to telephone a customer, they will ask if it is convenient or arrange another time to call and keep the appointment. **THE SWITCHBOARD SHOULD NEVER BE USED** for this purpose.

7.2.1.9. 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.

### **7.2.2. Answer phones and voicemail**

- a. Answer phones and voicemail may be used to ensure that telephone calls are answered. We will aim to provide the following:
- b. Recorded messages from answer phones will provide customers with an alternative contact number or details.
- c. Answer phone / voicemail will give the caller an option to leave a message.
- d. All Council messages must be responded to as soon as possible - ideally within 24 hours or the next working day if the message is left over a weekend, after hours or a public holiday.
- e. Staff / sections should update voicemail each day detailing whether available, on holiday or giving alternative contact details / numbers or forward calls to another number or colleague.
- f. Wherever possible the use of voicemail should be avoided. It is a sign of being too busy to attend to customers.

### **7.2.3. Written correspondence**

- a. Incoming written correspondence (fax and mail) will be acknowledged within three days (at maximum) and responded to in 10 working days (at maximum).
- b. Receipt of an email will be acknowledged in one (1) working day.
- c. The presentation and content of any written correspondence must be clear, easy to understand and jargon free, accurate and include a contact name and number.

- d. All issues raised by the customer will be acknowledged and responded to within the correspondences.

### 7.3. Complains Procedure

- a. Staff will aim to resolve all concerns raised by the customer immediately and informally.
- b. Staff will inform the customer that if the informal resolution is not to their satisfaction, they may make a formal complaint and explain how to do this.
- c. Customers should have an acknowledgement of their complaint within three days and a full written reply within 15 days.
- d. Heads of Departments will analyse any complaints about the service in their respective units and take remedial action so that problems do not recur.
- e. These service failures may involve:
  - i. Unjustified delays.
  - ii. Failure to follow council policies, rules or procedures.
  - iii. Failure to provide a service according to Batho Pele principles
  - iv. Failure to tell people of their rights or entitlements.
  - v. Providing inaccurate or misleading advice.

### 7.4. Publications

#### 7.4.1. The following information will be available in council publications:

- a. Standards of service against targets.
- b. Progress on projects undertaken by the municipality
- c. Changes made to services as a result of feedback, complaints or consultation with relevant stakeholders.

### 7.5. Suggestions

- a. We will encourage customers, partners and staff to make suggestions through a suggestion book located at the Reception area
- b. Additionally, the council will inform customers of any changes made to services as a result of their suggestions
- c. Suggestions and complaints should be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.



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- d. Suggestions and complaints should be addressed within 4 working days after acknowledgement
- e. Where concerns could not be addressed customers should be given valid reasons.

### **7.6. 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 a designated member of staff for (1) Health and Safety (2) First Aid and the details displayed.
- c. The council shall at all times comply with Health and Safety guidelines as espoused in the OHS Act No 85 of 1993.

### **7.7. Staff training and development**

- a. We will ensure that staff receives continuous training to enable them to satisfy customer expectations and keep their skills up-to-date.

### **7.8. Staff name badges**

- a. Where appropriate, staff will be neatly dressed to meet members of the public.
- b. Where appropriate, staff will wear printed name badges that specify their name and designation

### **7.9. Buildings and signage**

- a. Buildings will be clearly signed internally and externally.
- b. Reception points will be attended during opening hours.
- c. Reception points will be welcoming, clean and tidy.
- d. Reception points will display clear and accurate opening times.
- e. Details of services and personnel available will be displayed clearly in all reception areas.

### **7.6. Information / Communication**

- a. Information for the public will be clear and reviewed regularly.

- b. Published information will be accessible to customers with specific needs and in line with the Promotion of Access to Information Act no. 2 of 2000
- c. Information to the public and other stakeholders should be sent timeously

#### **7.11. Availability and access**

**7.11.1 We will ensure customers have easy access to information about:**

- a. Opening times.
- b. Offices and addresses.
- c. Names of managers.
- d. Facilities / services available.
- e. Access details.
- f. Means by which contact can be made.
- g. Out of hours contact details.

#### **7.12 Staff conduct, awareness and safety**

- a. Staff working at information centres must arrive on time at work and should never leave their centres unattended. Timeous permission should be sought from the immediate supervisor if a staff member wishes to leave the Information centre for whatever reason. The necessary disciplinary procedures shall be proffered against any staff member violating this clause.
- b. Staff will be courteous and polite and expect to be treated in the same way by customers.
- c. In any case of extended dispute, frontline staff must seek assistance from their immediate supervisor who will liaise with the immediate manager.
- d. We will ensure that procedures are in place to safeguard staff from both verbal and physical attack.
- e. We will take action - legal or otherwise - where verbal or physical attacks are made to staff.
- f. Staff shall at all times dress properly and wear their respective name badges for ease of identification by customers.
- g. In no time should staff, while at the Information centres answer cellphone. This is because cellphones are believed to be private and clients will have an impression they are not attended to.

**7.13. Customer information provision**

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

**7.14. Performance monitoring and evaluation**

- a. This policy will be reviewed every year to accommodate changing client's preferences
- b. We will have systems and processes in place that allow us to monitor and evaluate our performance and publicise our performance against standards.
- c. Mhlontlo Municipality will ensure that systems are in place to monitor service performance against the set standards
- d. Information will be collected from internal staff, service providers and the public to obtain inputs for improving the system.

**8. Reviewal**

This policy shall be reviewed on an annual basis depending on the change in legislation and / or business dynamics of the environment within which Mhlontlo municipality operates.

**9. COMMENCEMENT**

9.1. This policy will come into effect on the date of adoption by the Council.

**10. INTERPRETATION OF THIS POLICY**

- 10.1. All words contained in this policy shall have an ordinary meaning attached thereto, unless the definition or context indicates otherwise.
- 10.2. Any dispute on interpretation of this policy shall be declared in writing by any party concerned.
- 10.3. The Office of the Municipal Manager shall give a final interpretation of this policy in case of a written dispute.

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10.4. If the party concerned is not satisfied with the interpretation, a dispute may then be pursued with the South African Local Government Bargaining Council or Arbitration

### 11. PERMANENT/TEMPORARY WAIVER OR SUSPENSION OF THIS POLICY

11.1. This policy may be partly or wholly waived or suspended by the Municipal Council on a temporary or permanent basis after consultation between Management and Trade Unions.

11.2. Notwithstanding clause No. 20.1 the Municipal Manager may under circumstances of emergency temporarily waive or suspend this policy subject to reporting of such waiver or suspension to Council and Trade Unions.

### 12. AMENDMENT AND/OR ABOLITION OF THIS POLICY

12.1. This policy may be amended or repealed by the Council after consultation between Management and Trade Unions.

### 13. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT


13.1. Violation of or non-compliance with this policy will give a just cause for disciplinary steps to be taken.

13.2. It will be the responsibility of all Directors, Deputy Directors, Supervisors, Executive Committee and Council to enforce compliance with this policy.

### 14. Approval

This policy is approved by council of Mhlontlo local municipality with a council resolution and signature as follows:

**Signed on behalf Council by**



**N. Dywili**

**Mayor**



**S.G. Sotshongaye**

**Municipal Manager**