



# **INDIGENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT POLICY**

**2023/2024**

## **PREAMBLE**

**Whereas** section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa requires the Local government to ensure the provision of services in a sustainable manner, and whereas section 97 of the Municipal Systems Act prescribes that such policy must provide for 'provision for Indigent debtors that is consistent with its rates and tariff policies and any national policy on indigents'.

**Now therefore** the Municipal Council of the Municipality of Polokwane adopts the Indigent Policy as set out in this document.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. DEFINITIONS .....	3
2. OBJECTIVES OF POLICY .....	5
3. PRINCIPLES OF POLICY .....	5
4. CRITERIA FOR INDIGENT HOUSEHOLDS .....	5
5. CRITERIA FOR PENSIONERS.....	5
6. SUBSIDY .....	6
7. APPLICATION FOR A SUBSIDY .....	7
8. PUBLICATION OF NAMES OF QUALIFYING APPLICANTS .....	7
9. FALSE INFORMATION .....	7
10. INFORMATION AUDIT / VERIFICATION .....	7
11. DURATION OF SUBSIDY .....	7
12. TERMINATION OF SUBSIDY.....	8
13. AMOUNT IN ARREARS .....	8
14. REGISTER .....	8
15. APPROVAL, COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT & DISPUTE RESOLUTION .....	9
16. INDIGENT LEVY .....	9
17. SHORT TITLE.....	9

## 1. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, unless the context indicates otherwise, any word or expression to which a meaning has been attached in the Act shall bear the same meaning and means: -

<b>Authorized representative</b>	The person or instance legally appointed by the Council to act or to fulfil a duty on its behalf.
<b>Basic service</b>	The amount or level of any municipal service that is necessary to ensure human dignity and a reasonable quality of life and which, if not provided, could endanger public health or safety of the environment. For the purpose of this Policy basic services will be restricted to electricity, refuse, sewerage, water and any other rebates or exemptions as approved by Council.
<b>Chief Financial Officer</b>	An officer of the municipality appointed as the Head of the Budget and Treasury Directorate and includes any person acting in such position
<b>Council or Municipal Council</b>	A municipal council referred to in section 18 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No. 117 of 1998) and for purposes of this policy, the municipal council of the Municipality of Polokwane.
<b>Customer</b>	Any occupier of any property to which the Municipality has agreed to supply services or already supplies services to, or if there is no occupier, then the owner of the property.
<b>Defaulter</b>	A person who owes money in respect of a municipal account after the due date for payment has expired.
<b>Household</b>	A Property and all its occupants.
<b>Interest</b>	A levy with the same legal priority as service fees and calculated on all amounts in arrears at a standard rate as approved by Council.
<b>Municipal account</b>	The proper and formal notification by means of a statement of account, to persons liable for monies levied and indicating the net accumulated balance of the account, specifying charges levied by the Municipality.
<b>The Act</b>	The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000) as amended from time to time.
<b>Indigent</b>	A poor / needy household unable to make monetary contribution towards basic services and qualifies in accordance to this policy.
<b>Indigent Levy</b>	A fixed charge payable by qualifying Indigent households levied on a monthly basis.
<b>Subsidy</b>	The financial relief granted to qualifying indigent households

<b>Pensioner</b>	refers to a person who is 60 years of age and older in receipt of a total monthly income from all sources (including the income of the spouse of the owner) not exceeding an amount to be determined by the Council annually;
<b>Rural Indigent</b>	Rural household with unmetered unquantifiable services which can be estimated based on household stats from Statssa and estimated services rendered per household. Self-targeting will be used

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this Policy are to:-

- Provide a framework within which the Municipality can exercise its executive and legislative authority with regard to the implementation of financial aid to indigent and poor households in respect of their municipal account;
- Determine the criteria for qualification of Indigent households;
- Ensure that the criteria is applied correctly and fairly to all applicants;

## **3. PRINCIPLES**

- The administrative integrity of the Municipality must be maintained at all costs. Council is responsible for the adoption of the policy, while it is the responsibility of the Municipal Manager to ensure the execution of this policy;
- Applicants must complete an official application form, which is to be submitted together with the supporting documents as specified in this policy, where applicable;
- The municipality may at its own discretion convert all conventional meters to prepaid services.

## **4. CRITERIA FOR INDIGENT HOUSEHOLDS**

To qualify as 'Indigent household, a household must comply with the following criteria:-

- The total household income may not exceed the sum of two times the amount of state funded social grants plus two child grants currently as determined by the National Treasury of RSA from time to time.
- The applicant must be a permanent resident of the property.
- The applicant must be a South African citizen.
- The applicant who owns more than one property will only be granted Indigent assistance on the property of primary occupation. Polokwane Municipality reserves the right to reverse indigent benefits of an additional property should there be evidence that the applicant has applied for indigent assistance on additional properties.
- The applicant may not necessarily be the owner of the property but could also be the occupier including a child headed family.
- The Municipality reserves the right to consolidate separate accounts of one property in instances where the owner of the property is deceased.
- The property should be used for residential purposes

## **5. CRITERIA FOR PENSIONERS**

The aim of this rebate is to alleviate the burden on pensioners earning below the approved threshold as per the tariff schedule. Pensioners may receive a reduction and a rebate of an amount as determined by Council during the annual budget.

Subject to the criteria set out in below:

- Pensioners may be granted a rebate on their Primary Property, from the date the applicant qualifies.
- The applicant must meet the following criteria:
- The applicant must be a south African citizen

- where couples are married in community of property and the property is registered in both their names, the age of the eldest will be the qualifying factor;
- not be in receipt of an indigent rebate;
- A rebate will only be granted in respect of a property on which only one dwelling is erected and such dwelling be occupied by the applicant and his/her dependants.
- Combined household income must be below the threshold set by council
- if the owner has retired at an earlier age for medical reasons proof thereof must be submitted;
- The total income household should not exceed two times the indigent threshold

## 6. SUBSIDY

The subsidies below will be funded from the Equitable share contribution received from National Treasury. The subsidies will only be granted to qualifying households to the extent that the above-mentioned funds are available for allocation.

a) The qualifying Indigent households may receive the following subsidy per month.

- 100% rebate of the basic charges for electricity per month
- 100% rebate of the availability charge for sewerage per month
- 100% rebates on sewer connection charge per month.
- 100% rebate of the basic charge for refuse removal per month
- 100% rebate of refuse charge per month
- 100% rebate on property rates
- 100kwh electricity consumption subsidy per month (cumulative on Pre-paid)
- 50kWh on Eskom supply Areas
- 6kl Water consumption subsidy per month (cumulative on Pre-paid)

b) Other Rural Benefits/subsidy

- Basic water
- Other alternative energy
- Basic refuse removal
- Basic sanitation

The rural indigent may be costed and quantified in order to account for the cost incurred to grant household access to average basic services on unmetered services.

c) Pensioner Subsidy

- 80% rebate on property rates

Exemption may be granted for connection or deposit fees to qualifying indigents or poor household subject to approval by the Chief Financial Officer or Delegate.

## 7. APPLICATION FOR A SUBSIDY

Only the owner or occupier of the property may apply for the subsidy.

The following documents must be submitted with the application form:-

- Certified copy of the applicant's South African Identity Document.
- Proof of income of the household (e.g. a letter from employer/ salary advice/ proof of pension/ bank statement)

- 3 Months latest bank statement
- Any other proof or confirmation/ evidencing the qualification as indigent
- Letter of Authority in case of deceased person's estate from the magistrate or Master of the High Court where necessary
- Marriage certificate for married applicants
- Sworn affidavits that gross household income is less than the threshold set by council and that the information supplied is true and all income is declared;
- The applicant must complete the sworn statement that forms part of the application form; and
- Should the applicant be unable to apply in person, due to medical reasons, his / her application may be certified by a Commissioner of Oaths, or a community worker.
- The municipality may consider self-targeting to indigent and approach such to register if they are receiving measurable services.

## **8. PUBLICATION OF NAMES OF QUALIFYING APPLICANTS**

The Municipality may publish or make available the register of the applicants receiving subsidies in terms of this policy for inspection and objection within the legislative framework

## **9. FALSE INFORMATION**

A person who provides false information will be disqualified and be denied further participation in the subsidy scheme. In addition, the beneficiary will be held liable for the payment of any incorrect subsidies already granted and legal action, civil or criminal may be instituted against the guilty party/parties.

## **10. INFORMATION AUDIT/ VERIFICATION**

The Municipality reserves the right to send officials and / or representatives of the Municipality to the applicant address at any reasonable time, with the aim of carrying out a local verification of the accuracy of the information provided by the applicant(s) and to collect more information. The applicant must provide access to the auditor in line with section 101 of the Municipal System Act

Such audit will be conducted on a continuous basis as and when is required.

- a) Verification Site Visit

The Municipality may utilise the services of a service provider to perform an on-site verification.

- b) Verification external scan

An external scan may be conducted with UIF, SARS, Department of Social Development, Retail and Credit Bureau amongst others to confirm the credibility of the applicant to qualify as an indigent

- c) Municipality may cancel the application or suspend subsidy after 3 unsuccessful attempts of site verification

## **11. DURATION OF SUBSIDY**

The duration of the indigent and pensioner's subsidy will be from date of the approval limited to 5 year linked to the term of the council

The municipality may require the indigent beneficiary to renew their indigent status periodically as and when required.

All application will be finalized within 60 business days from the date of application provided that all the requirement as outlined in policy are met and the customer is available for verification



## **12. TERMINATION OF INDIGENT SUBSIDY**

Municipality may terminate the indigent subsidy

- a) If the municipality obtains information that indicates that the circumstances of the beneficiary has changed to such an extent that he / she no longer qualifies for the subsidy, the Municipality reserves the right to suspend the subsidy and recover the subsidy provided to a period not exceeding 24 months or earlier
- b) Upon change of ownership of the property
- c) When the household no longer meet the criteria as outlined in the policy

## **13. AMOUNT IN ARREARS**

Beneficiaries with municipal accounts in arrears at the time of the application (approval) for a subsidy, may have such arrear amounts written off upon approval depending on availability of budget/funds.

An indigent debt will be written off from time to time as recommended by Council

## **14. REGISTER**

The register may contain the name of the applicant, the name of the registered owner of the property, the identity number of the applicant, the contact details, the suburb, stand number, sub-division, street address, ward number and application date.

This Indigent register will be updated on monthly basis as and when applications are received.

## **15. COMPLAINT/APEAL MANAGEMENT AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

Complaint or dispute management will be managed by the Revenue Executive committee established by the Revenue Manager.

The Revenue Executive Committee will comprise only of senior revenue officials not limited to The Revenue Manager, Revenue Assistant managers, Senior Accountant and Accountants.

The Revenue Executive Committee must meet at least once per month. The Indigent Committee must consider each complaint; assess it in terms of this policy and any other information which members may have in respect of the applicant.

The applicant may lodge formal appeal in terms of section 62 of Municipal System Act if not satisfied with the decision of the Revenue Executive Committee

## **16. INDIGENT LEVY**

An Indigent levy will be charged to the account of all approved indigents in accordance with the approved schedule of tariffs.

## **17. SHORT TITLE**

This policy shall be called the Indigent and social support Policy of the Polokwane Municipality.

## **18. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF POLICY**

This policy shall be implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 and shall be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that is in line with the municipality's strategic objectives and with legislation.