



## **CUSTOMER CARE POLICY**

**2017/18**

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# **CUSTOMER CARE POLICY**

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## **Preamble**

Whereas **Section 95** of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act, Act No 32 of 2000 requires a Municipality to exercise Customer Care and Management in relation to levying of rates and other taxes.

And Whereas Section 156(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1999 conferred powers of the Municipality to administer. Now therefore the Municipal Council of Polokwane Municipality adopts the Customer Care Policy as set out in this document.

### **INTERPRETATION AND OBJECTIVES**

In establishing itself as a progressive and service oriented municipality, Polokwane Municipality, the City of Stars, is committed to focusing on its customers' needs as well as creating a positive and reciprocal relationship between the community or customers of the Municipality and the Municipality itself.

In order to achieve this objective, this Customer Care Policy has been adopted to develop structures to ensure that in our dealing with customers these values are demonstrated and in line with Batho Pele Principles.

## 1. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

To establish a sound customer management system that aims:

- 1.1 To meet the consumer' s needs in a responsible and pro-active way
- 1.2 To enhance and to create a positive and cooperative relationship between the Municipality in relation to the payment of levied rates and other taxes by the Municipality and where applicable, any service provider.
- 1.3 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
- 1.4 To provide a reliable, responsive, competent, accessible, courteous, multi-optional, affordable and to treat consumers with empathy at all times and under all circumstances.
- 1.5 To ensure that customers are provided with the relevant information as and when its needed in the appropriate format
- 1.6 To ensure that customer complaints are addressed promptly, timeously and to the full satisfaction of the customer
- 1.7 To ensure that customers, both internal and external to the municipality receive consistent and fair treatment at all times
- 1.8 To define a manageable customer care framework to ensure loyalty and participation of customers into the objectives of the municipality.
- 1.9 To restore and promote the culture of paying for services rendered and used.
- 1.10 To encourage those not paying, to do so in the interest of sustainable services delivery.
- 1.11 To equip Municipal staff with knowledge and competencies to continuously enhance the service standards according to changing customer needs

## 2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Polokwane Municipality is aiming at setting a consistently excellent service standard in its dealings with customers.
- 2.2 It is also the Municipality's aim that and that every time the customers contact the Municipality they do so conveniently and they are treated courteously, promptly and fairly.
- 2.3 Municipality is committed to ensuring that the human rights principles set out in the National Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, as well as the *Batho Pele*

Principles, aimed at transformation of public service delivery, and “getting it right the first time”, forms the basis on which Polokwane Municipality’s service delivery rests.

2.4 By laying this basis and building a service delivery model thereon, the Municipality wants to display the commitment to the principle of “Customer First” and ensuring that service excellence forms an integral part of the planning and delivery of all Municipal services to our community.

### 3. MUNICIPAL VALUES

- a) As a service delivery orientated organisation, and in order to satisfy the goal of achieving Customer Service excellence, a common set of values, that guides the interaction between municipal staff and our customers shall form the basis of the relationship between the Municipality and its Customers.
- b) Commitment to the following values will guide our Staff interaction with Customers and form the cornerstone of our customer focused approach:
  - i) Mutual Respect, which includes mutual trust and understanding.
  - ii) Good Customer Care.
  - iii) Efficient and Excellent Service.
  - iv) Integrity and Professionalism.
  - v) Equity and Fairness
  - vi) Compassion and Dignity

### 4. “PEOPLE FIRST” – THE *BATHO PELE* PRINCIPLE

National Government’s approach to all interaction between government institutions and the public is based on the eight “Batho Pele Principles”, which forms the foundation of service delivery to the public. Therefore Customers of the Municipality:-

- a. Should be given a choice about the services offered to them and also be **consulted** about the level and the quality of the public service they receive.
- b. Has to be informed regarding the level and quality of public services (**service standards**) they will receive, in order to be aware of what service to expect.

- c. Should have **equitable access** to the services they are entitled to.
- d. Has to be treated with **courtesy** and with consideration.
- e. Should be given full and accurate **information** regarding the public services they are entitled to receive
- f. Has, in an **open and transparent** way, to be informed on how services are calculated and levied.
- g. Where the promised standard of service is not delivered, in **redress**, should be offered an apology, an explanation and a speedy and effective remedy, and when complaints are lodged, Customers should receive a sympathetic, positive response thereto.
- h. Has to receive Municipal services (as a public service) provided economically and efficiently so as to give the best possible **value for money**.

## 5. THE CUSTOMER

Habitually the people the municipalities dealt with were primarily referred to as ratepayers or consumers. This created an unequal balance as these people were seen either as taxpayers or as people who consumed essential services provided by the Municipality.

The aim is at changing this mind set and constantly reminding ourselves that we are dealing with Customers,

- a. Thus, Customers are all the people that we as a Municipality deal with in the execution of our daily duties and work.
- b. Customers are the people who live in, work in or visit our City and Municipality and who do business with the Municipality.
- c. In this sense, the Municipality has internal as well as external Customers and the same standards shall apply to internal (colleagues and service providers) as to external Customers.

## 6. CUSTOMER CARE

**Customer Care is a comprehensive approach that provides seamless co-ordination between all departments of the Municipality. Promoting awareness amongst**

employees to become more consumers orientated. To provide a good, efficient service, communicating this to a customer or consumer which in turn would achieve a higher customer satisfaction. This awareness should also make it much easier to manage revenue for services rendered and elevate Revenue protection to a whole new level.

**Section 95 of the Local Government Systems Act 32 of 2000 describes customer care actions to be taken by the Municipality and therefore setting minimum services levels.**

In relation to the services for which the Council levy and recover fees, tariffs or other payments, the Council hereby acknowledges the need to –

- (a) establish a sound customer management system that aims to create a positive and reciprocal relationship between users of the service and the service provider;
- (b) establish mechanisms for residents and users of the service to give feedback to the service provider regarding the quality of the service and performance of the service provider;
- (c) ensure that residents and consumers understand the cost involved in service provision, the reasons for payment of service tariffs, and the manner in which monies raised from consumers are utilized;
- (d) as far as is practicable, ensure that the consumption of services by individual households is measured through accurate and verifiable metering systems;
- (e) ensure that consumers who are required to pay for services receive regular and accurate accounts that indicate the basis for calculating the amounts due for rates and service charges;
- (f) provide accessible mechanisms for residents and consumers to query or verify accounts and metered consumption, and appeal procedures which allow residents and consumers to receive prompt redress for inaccurate accounts;
- (g) provide accessible mechanisms for dealing with complaints from residents and consumers together with prompt replies and corrective action by the Council;
- (h) provide mechanisms to monitor the response time and efficiency of the actions set out in paragraph (g); and
- (i) provide sufficient and accessible pay points and other mechanisms for settling accounts.

## **7. WHAT CUSTOMER CARE IS AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT**

7.1 Polokwane Municipality is committed to assist its Customers in getting the help they need in approaching the Municipality.

7.2 It is the Municipality's aim to, whenever contacted by a Customer, make it convenient for the Customer to do so as well as treat such a Customer courteously, promptly and fairly.

7.3 This in essence means ensuring that the Customer will receive a prompt and clear response to any enquiry made within a stated period of time as defined in the Customer Care Standards and Management Controls as well as in the Customer Service Charters for the various service delivery counters.

7.4 Customer Care embodies the principle of taking care of Municipal Customers in a positive manner, as part of the set of behaviours to be undertaken in interaction with our Customers.

7.5 In order to achieve this it is important to clearly set goals as to how we can put Customers First. It is important to define what Service Excellence in Customer Care is so that all officials/staff will know what standards have to be maintained by them in executing their duties.

7.6 At the same time and in addition to staff education on Customer Care, Customers has to be informed what standards of Customer Care they can expect whenever they engage with any officials/staff of Polokwane Municipality.

7.7 The "Customer First" principle will also be adhered to by the Municipality in all policies and procedures to be considered.

7.8 Therefore Customer Care is:-

- a. Treating all Customers with courtesy, dignity and respect;
- b. As far as possible customers may be served in their language of choice, always bearing in mind that English is the official communicating language of Council as per resolution;
- c. Providing a good quality service in a friendly, efficient and helpful manner;

- d. Giving people the information they need and providing an explanation where the service is not available or up to the expected standard;
- e. Keeping the Customers informed of progress in addressing their complaints, requests and enquiries.

7.9 Subsequently Customer Care standards are important to ensure:-

- i. That all Customers, whether they are residents or visitors to Polokwane Municipality, will receive the same consistent high standards of customer care;
- ii. That Customer Care and service to Customers are essential to the planning and delivery of all Council Services;
- iii. That Polokwane Municipality officials will constantly be reminded of their responsibility in putting the Customer First and what this means in practical terms;
- iv. That Polokwane Municipality will eliminate wastage by providing all services "Right the First Time".

## **8. CUSTOMER CARE CYCLE**

*(The following will be dealt as per section 6 and 7 of the Reviewed Credit Control and Debt Collection Policy)*

8.1 The Municipality provides services to the consumers.

8.2 Afford opportunities for customer queries to be addressed.

8.3 Implement the follow up process of query resolution.

8.4 Ensure community interaction outside the office.

8.5 Implement processes to produce accurate and credible accounts.

8.6 Bill for the service rendered.

8.7 Issue accounts to consumers.

8.8 Remind customers by issuing notices to settle accounts.

8.9 Issue final notices to non-paying consumers, a further opportunity to the consumer to either raise queries or to make arrangements for account payment.

8.10 Consult with non-paying consumers, as part of the final demand process and actual credit control action and enforcement of credit policy.

8.11 Final step is to restrict or disconnect actual services to the consumer, with clear municipal input via the customer care and debt collecting policies.

## **9. CUSTOMER INTERACTION**

### **9.1 Face to Face Contact**

- a) Customers will be treated in a courteous and polite 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) Staff at first point of contact will give customers the option of seeing specialist members of staff
- f) At first contact, staff will aim to ensure that customers are not left unattended for more than five minutes in reception

### **9.2 Waiting Times**

- a) 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 care officials must inform the customer

### **9.3 Telephone Calls**

- a) Staff will aim to answer telephone calls within a reasonable time, whichever is greater
- b) Staff should aim, wherever possible, to resolve the customer's enquiry at first contact.
- c) 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

### **9.4 Written Correspondence**

- a) Incoming written correspondence will be acknowledged within three days and responded to in 10 working days
- b) Receipt of an email will be acknowledged in one working day
- c) All issues raised by the customer will be acknowledged and responded to within the correspondence

### **9.5 Complaints 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) Heads of Departments will analyse any complaints about the service in their respective units and take remedial action

## **10. MEASURING SUCCESS IN CUSTOMER CARE**

- 10.1 Polokwane Municipality Customer Care Policy is extended with specific Customer Service Charters for each service delivery counter, in which Charter the Customer Care Standards for that specific service point is contained.
- 10.2 Customer Care Staff attending to the various service delivery counters shall Pledge, committing themselves to upholding the Customer Care Standards set for their various service counters.
- 10.3 Satisfactory Customer Care performance by Municipal officials/staff will be monitored continuously and regular Performance review.
- 10.4 Methods for receiving Customer feedback will be developed and communicated to the customers.
- 10.5 Communication means will be developed and communicated to the customers within the constraints of the municipal resources.
- 10.6 Comments, compliments and complaints from Customers are an important part of the process and will assist in building a “Customer First” organisation. Monitoring methods will further help in developing programmes to address any shortcomings in the standard of the Municipality’s service.

## **STANDARDS AND CONTROLS IN CUSTOMER CARE**

### **11. Customer Care Standards**

Polokwane Municipality is committed to the continuous improvement of the standards of service it renders to its Customers. For this reason the Municipality is endeavouring to provide services and manage complaints in a manner which is timeous, efficient and effective.

In reaching this goal in service delivery the following principles have been set as Customer Care Standards:-

- a. A friendly and courteous service that puts the Customer first; that is Customer focused and measurable;
- b. Clear guidelines along which officials/staff is to behave in dealing with Customers;

- c. Clear, achievable performance targets;
- d. Trained officials/staff who have a full understanding of the standards of performance expected from them and who are at the same time – through training – capacitated to achieve these performance standards.
- e. Commitment to equal opportunities which will provide:-
  - i) Support, interpretation and translation services;
  - ii) Clear signage to direct Customers to where they need to go;
  - iii) Accessible, welcoming buildings and service counters;
  - iv) Disabled access wherever practicable;
  - v) Private areas when necessary where Customers can discuss private and sensitive matters;
  - vi) Officials/staff trained in awareness and understanding.

## **12. Customer Expectations**

Customers of Polokwane Municipality can expect the following treatment from officials/staff:-

- a. Courtesy, respect and consideration towards a Customer at all times;
- b. Officials/staff will identify themselves by name and communicate by listening and responding appropriately
- c. Communicate efficiently, with integrity, fairly and professionally;
- d. To be provided with relevant, accurate and up-to-date information;
- e. Actively seeking comments on a regular basis in order to continue and develop a service of high standard;
- f. In instances where problems arise:-
  - i. Officials/staff will deal with such a problem promptly;

- ii. Advise on a probable delay in provision of a solution to the problem as well as any relevant reasons;
- iii. Update on progress with long-term problems;
- iv. Advise on how and who to contact in the event of any dissatisfaction.

### **13. Customer Care: Management Controls**

At the core of the service delivery principle of placing the Customer first, lays the practical challenges for the Municipality as organisation that requires us to re-evaluate processes as well as ensure achievement of set standards.

For the purpose of meeting that goal, controls to measure the Municipality's overall performance has been set in place, including:-

- a. Compliance with or adherence to the Customer Care Service Standards to be reflected as a Key Performance Indicator on each responsible official's Performance Plan;
- b. Continuous training programmes for officials/staff to ensure effective service delivery and Customer satisfaction;
- c. Continuous monitoring and review of processes and procedures in ensuring the Customer is put first;
- d. consideration for introduction of a computerised call-logging and tracking system, ensuring sensitivity and efficiency in the enquiries, complaints and feedback received from Customers.

### **14. CUSTOMER CARE CHARTERS**

The charter is binding on all employees and councilors associated with the municipality. Staff shall therefore:

- 14.1 At all times be accessible to members of the public;
- 14.2 At all times conduct themselves in a professional, ethical manner and promote the image of the Municipality;
- 14.3 Shall strive to be professional in approach when dealing with members of the public;
- 14.4 Shall serve and execute their duties with due diligence and honesty;

- 14.5 Shall strive to be resourceful in giving information to the public and such information shall be accurate and up-to-date about the services provided and who is entitled to it.
- 14.6 Shall not unduly disclose information privileged to the municipality outside parties without prior approval.
- 14.7 Shall at all times be friendly, polite and professional when answering telephone calls.
- 14.8 Shall be willing to take messages should a client wish to speak to specific official who might be readily available and ensure that the relevant official receives such message and which are accurately conveyed.
- 14.9 Shall confirm telephonic discussions, should the matter necessitate that it be confirmed in writing.
- 14.10 Shall respond to telephonic enquiries promptly and make follow-ups when management had undertaken to respond at a later stage.
- 14.11 Shall answer telephone calls primarily in English, however, should a client wish to be addressed in any of the official languages, the request will be respected.
- 14.12 Be prompt in response on correspondence requiring written response, reasonably within five working days.
- 14.13 Shall treat all members of the public equally, without distinction of race, religion, gender or social orientation.
- 14.14 Shall observe official working hours in order not to prejudice or inconvenience members of the public.
- 14.15 Shall honor all bona fide contractual obligations entered into on behalf of the District Municipality.
- 14.16 Shall, upon enquiry by a member of public, furnish information regarding the status of projects executed by the Municipality.
- 14.17 Shall at all times observe the Code of Conduct for employees as contemplated in schedule 2 of the Local Government Municipal system Act 32 of 2000.

## **15. VARIOUS SERVICE DELIVERY COUNTERS**

### **15.1 Disabled and Senior Citizens only.**

General enquires on all Municipal Services.

### **15.2 Municipal Services General – excluding Traffic & Licenses, Community Safety & Disaster Management.**

- a. Any query or complaint regarding Corporate and Technical Services to be recorded and submitted to the relevant Service Business Units.
- b. Means of communication between SBU's to be done via
  - Telephones; and
  - E-mails
- c. Centralized database to be maintained for accurate reporting and tracking purpose of all complaints.
- d. All Financial Services complaints must be captured on the financial systems notepad.
- e. Feedback to customers to be done via telephone and or e-mails and in person for walk in customers
- f. Turn-around time regarding feedback or completion of the complaint or query, must not exceed 21 (twenty one ) days, alternatively according to timeframes as set in Policies and By-Laws of The Polokwane Municipality
- g. All queries and complaints that are not being dealt within the prescribed timeframe must be escalated to the next levels: Direct Supervisor, Assistant Manager, Manager, Director and ultimately the Municipal Manager.

**15.3 Indigents and request for extension on payments:**

- a. All Indigents related queries
- b. Apply for extension of payments on service accounts on the prescribed via the prescribed documents

**15.4 Account Statements and Clearances:**

- a. Issuing of duplicates accounts, histories and various reports.
- b. Receive applications for clearance requests on transfer of properties
- c. Attorney correspondence relating to clearances only (Submit and collect)

**15.5 Budget and Treasury – General enquiries:**

- a. All account and related queries.
- b. Request special meter readings on the prescribed document, accompanied by payments as stipulated in the Tariff policy.

- c. Request a Meter Test on the prescribed document, accompanied by payments as stipulated in the Tariff policy.
- d. Changing of addresses.
- e. Requesting ACB payment methods.
- f. Cancellation of ACB payment methods.
- g. Application in respect of arrangement of payments.
- h. Valuation certificates/roll at the tariff as per Councils Tariff policy.
- i. Request information subject to stipulation of Access to the Information as stipulated in The Promotion of Access to Information Act, Act 2 of 2000.
- j. Profile updates.

#### **15.6 Connection and Disconnection of supply services:**

- a. Apply for water and electricity services on the prescribed documents.
- b. Notification of disconnection of services on the prescribed documents.  
\*Arrange final readings, including arrangements of access to premises by authorized representatives of the Municipality for purposes of final readings. Refer **section 101** of the Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000.

#### **15.7 Cashiers.**

- a. Cashiers general.
- b. Renewal of vehicle licenses and Cash Power
- c. Disabled, Senior Citizens and Tender documents

#### **15.8 Municipal Control Centre (Ladanna)**

The following services are located within the Municipal Control Centre by dialling the following telephone numbers: 015-290 2000 – Any Municipal related enquiries:

- Vehicle registration enquiries;
- Water & Electricity cut-off lists;
- Polokwane Mapping (Geographical Information System);
- Provincial Traffic After-hours call-out procedures;
- Electrical and water Complaints;
- Information on security and traffic cameras;
- Vodacom/MTN Emergency Numbers;

- Disaster Management Information;
- Mobile Control Unit (Combined JOC);
- Reporting bomb threats;
- Reporting serious occurrences;
- Reporting drowning;
- Complaints relating to animals;
- Towing Services radio link;
- Civil defence radio link.

### **15.9 Municipal Call Centre (Civic Centre)**

Call Centre telephone numbers: 015- 290 2916/7/8/9. For the following enquiries:

- Account enquiries
- Billing enquiries

### **16. Top 100 Customers:**

- a. The Top 100 service account holders, (Top 100 customers); will directly be managed by the Accountant Billing and Accountant Customer Care
- b. The core components of managing these customers must include:
  - i) Ensuring monthly accurate billing;
  - ii) Ensuring timeous delivery of accurate bills;
  - iii) Ensuring and upholding a direct communication channel between the Polokwane Municipality and the representatives of the Top 100 customers;
  - iv) Ensuring and maintaining a positive relationship between these Top 100 customers and the Polokwane Municipality; and
  - v) Submitting a monthly report on the status of the Top 100 Customers to the Assistant Manager.

### **17. Communication to public regarding meter reading and meter reading schedules**

- a. A meter reading calendar must be communicated to the general public at least every year, or informing the Public on:
  - i) The dates of the monthly meter readings – when to expect the meter readers at their property;

- ii) Identification of meter readers collecting meter readings;
- b. Members of the public must be informed that it is an offence under section 101 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act to restrict accessibility of meters to authorised representatives of the Municipality. Inaccessible meters must be read at least within a three month cycle to correct under/over estimations.
- c. Members of the public must further be informed that failure to receive an account does not relieve a consumer of the obligation to pay an amount due and payable. Accounts can be obtained during normal working hours, per e-mail, telephone request or by visiting the Civic Centre or any satellite office.

#### **18. Organisational conduct: Code of Conduct of all Municipal Officials**

- a. All Municipal Officials shall treat all customers with dignity and respect at all times. Employees shall execute their duties in an honest and transparent manner whilst protecting the confidentiality of information in accordance with the Promotion of Access to Information Act No. 2 of 2000.
- b. Where information held by the municipality is requested by Customers, such information shall only be made available in accordance with the Municipality's official Promotion of Access to Information Manual and provided that the necessary application forms have been filled in by a customer and the required fee has been paid.
- c. All Councillors and officials shall conduct themselves according to the "Code of Conduct" for Councillors and Municipal Staff members as contained in Schedule 1 & 2 of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000.

#### **19. SHORT TITLE**

**This policy shall be called the Customer Care Policy of the Polokwane Municipality.**