

DRAKENSTEIN MUNICIPALITY

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Communications Policy of Drakenstein Municipality

Policy Objective

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that communications across Drakenstein Municipality is well co-ordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public.

APPROVED/AMENDED	MEETING	DATE
Approved	Council	5 March 2009

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of must Municipality to :

1. **Provide the public with timely, accurate, clear, objective and complete information about its policies, programme, services and initiatives.**

2. **Communication in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa**

This policy recognizes the equal status of English, Afrikaans and Xhosa as the three official languages of the Western Cape and therefore that of Drakenstein Municipality. It recognizes the right of the public to communicate with Drakenstein Municipality in the language of their choice. Communications with the public and services to the public will be provided in all of these languages as far as it is possible and reasonable.

3. **Ensure that Councillors and employees of the Drakenstein Municipality are visible, accessible and accountable to the public they serve**

To be accessible and accountable, the Council and its employees should be visible and recognizable wherever they are present. Clear identification allows the public to see the Council at work, access its programme and services, and to assess its activities.

4. **Employ a variety of ways and means to communicate, and provide information in multiple formats to accommodate diverse needs**

Council information should be broadly accessible throughout society. The needs of all People, whose perceptual of physical abilities and language skills are diverse, should be recognized and accommodated. Information should be accessible so citizens, as responsible members of a democratic community, may be aware of, understand, respond to and influence the development and implementation of policies, programme, services and initiatives. All means of communication - from traditional methods to new technologies - should be used to

reach and communicate with People wherever they may reside.

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5. **Identify and address communication needs and issues routinely in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, programme, services and initiatives**

Internal and external communication requirements should be identified and met when planning, managing or reviewing policies, programme, services or initiatives.

6. **Consult the public, listen to and take account of people's interests and concerns when establishing priorities, developing policies, and planning programme and services**

The Council should learn as much as possible about public needs and expectations in order to respond to them effectively. The dialogue between citizens and their Council should be continuous, open, inclusive, relevant, clear, secure and reliable. Communication is a two-way process.

7. **Deliver prompt, courteous and responsive service that is sensitive to the needs and concerns of the public and respectful of individual rights**

Information services should be managed in a citizen-centered and client-focused manner that achieves results for People as envisaged in the Batho Pele programme. Timely and convenient access to Council information and services programme be available to the public.

8. **Ensure all the departments of the Drakenstein Municipality work collaboratively in a coherent and effective manner in communicating with the public.**

POLICY REQUIREMENTS

1. **Informing and Serving People**

To assure quality service that meets the information needs of all People. The Communications Department should ensure that :

- (a) a variety of new and traditional methods of communication are used to accommodate the needs of a diverse public ;
- (b) published information is available on request in multiple formats to accommodate persons with disabilities ;

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- (c) information in all formats is well identified as being from Drakenstein Municipality ;
- (d) prompt and clear explanations are provided when information requested by the public is unavailable ;
- (e) information is available on the standard of service the institution provides to the public, including time frames for responding to inquiries, mail and complaints ;
- (f) opportunities are available for the public to provide feedback on major policies, programme, services and initiatives, and that such feedback is carefully considered in reviews or evaluations of same to help make improvements.

2. **Plain Language**

An institution's duty to inform the public includes the obligation to communicate effectively. Information about policies, programme, services and initiatives should be clear, relevant, objective, easy to understand and useful. To ensure clarity and consistency of information, plain language and correct grammar should be used in all communication with the public. This principle also applies to internal communications, as well as to information prepared for Council or any other official body.

3. **Corporate Identity**

Clear and consistent corporate identity is required to assist the public in recognizing, accessing and assessing the policies, programme, services and initiatives of Drakenstein Municipality. To maintain a

recognizable and unified corporate identity throughout the Council, buildings, facilities, programme, services and activities should clearly be identifiable. In identifying contributions or activities, the Communications Department should give prominence to the official symbols of Drakenstein Municipality in all information and communication materials, regardless of medium, for internal or external use.

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4. **Environment Analysis**

To evaluate and address public needs and expectations effectively - to anticipate issues that may arise and to formulate appropriate response strategies. The Communications Department working with the other departments should routinely monitor and analyse the public environment as it relates to their policies, programme, services and initiatives.

5. **Public Opinion Research**

Public opinion research will be undertaken from time to time as it helps the Council to better understand Drakenstein Municipality society and to identify citizen needs and expectations. It is used to assess the public's response to proposals or to possible changes or initiatives ; to assess the effectiveness of policies, programme and services ; to measure progress in service improvement; to evaluate the effectiveness of communication activities such as advertising; and to plan and evaluate marketing initiatives, among other applications.

6. **Consultation and Citizen Engagement**

Communication requirements should be taken into account in the planning, management and evaluation of consultation and citizen engagement activities. Open and responsive communications are critical to the success of public consultations, as is factual information presented to participants in plain language.

Communications staff provide advice and support to managers who plan, implement or evaluate public participation processes. Managers responsible for public participation work collaboratively with communications staff, who prepare and help to implement communication plans and strategies.

7. Management and Co-ordination

Communications are a shared responsibility that should be co-ordinated with other areas of management.

Clear working links should be maintained at all times between communications and other core functions of the Council. The Council will :

(a) develop, implement, manage and evaluate policies, programme, services and initiatives with the ongoing advice, support and involvement of specialists in Council communications ;

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(b) ensure that the communications function has the resources needed to fulfil the requirements of this policy, and that resources are prudently managed ;

(c) examine ways to increase efficiency in responding to communication issues, and adjust and simplify approval processes as necessary ;

(d) ensure the coherence and consistency of information and messages across all channels of communication, from in-person service, telephone and mail, to facsimile, Internet and electronic transmission.

8. Planning and Evaluation

The Council should integrate communication planning into their annual business planning process and evaluate communications work as an integral part of its operations. Business plans should take into account Drakenstein Municipality's communication requirements. The Council should prepare a corporate communication plan that :

- identifies target audiences inside and outside of the institution (citizens, stakeholder groups, etc) ;

- S takes account of the views and concerns of audiences inside and outside of the institution (i.e internal and external environments) ;
- S delineates strategies, tools, messages and responsibilities for communication with target audiences ; and
- S sets out operational needs and resource allocations.

The corporate communication plan should be periodically reviewed, evaluated and updated in conjunction with the business planning and budgeting cycle. The Communications Department should :

- (a) ensure that communication planning forms an integral part of program and policy initiatives and that communication requirements are fully accounted for within budgets and financial plans ;
 - (b) ensure that the public environment - particularly the views and needs of citizens is assessed at all stages of an initiative and reflected in communication plans ;
 - (c) precise communication strategies are developed for communication campaigns ;
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- (d) ensure communication plans and strategies for policies, programme, services and initiatives are developed collaboratively with input from responsible managers ;
 - (e) reflect Drakenstein Municipality themes and messages in communication plans and strategies ;
 - (f) track the performance of communication products and measure results achieved against objectives set in communication and business plans ;
 - (g) evaluate the effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness, of communication programme and campaigns developed in support of policy or program initiatives, and make the necessary improvements or adjustments to ensure the efficacy of plans, strategies and activities.

9. Internal Communication

Internal communications is an integral part of the Council's

communications strategy and should be addressed in the corporate communication plan. Collaboration, particularly between human resources management and the communications function, is essential to ensure internal communication requirements are met. Internal communication activities and processes should be reviewed from time to time to evaluate results, to identify areas for improvement, and to make adjustments as needed.

10. Technological Innovation and New Media

The Communications Department should maintain a capacity for innovation and stay abreast with developments in communications practice and technology. As they adopt new means of communication, the Communications Department should continue to reach, in a timely manner, citizens whose access to technology may be limited or who prefer to receive Council information through more traditional means. To ensure new technology advances an institution's ability to connect with People in efficient and practical ways, all investment plans and decisions should be developed collaboratively by managers in information technology, communications and other key functions, such as program and service delivery, and human resources.

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11. Internet and Electronic Communication

The Communications Department should maintain an active presence on the Internet. E-mail and Web site should be used to enable direct communications between People and Council and among public managers and employees. The Communications Department should advance Drakenstein Municipality on-line initiatives aimed at expanding the reach and quality of internal and external communications, improving service delivery, connecting and interacting with citizens, enhancing public access and fostering public dialogue. The Communications Department should ensure that Internet communications conform to Council policies and standards. Drakenstein Municipality themes and messages should be accurately reflected in electronic communications

with the public and among employees. To ensure congruence with other communication activities, the Council's Web site and portals should be reviewed regularly by the Departmental Head : Communications, or his or her designate, who oversees and advises on Web content and design. Web site managers should consult with communications staff on the editorial and visual content of Web pages, including design and presentation, to ensure publishing standards and other communication requirements are met. Collaboration is also required between communications and information technology specialists to ensure effective planning and management of electronic information services. Managers and employees responsible for the operational and technical aspects of an institution's Web-based systems work in consultation with communications staff who provide strategic advice on Web content and the use of technology for communication purposes. The Communications Department should :

- ensure that Internet-published information on policies, programme, services and initiatives is regularly updated, accurate, easy to understand and accessible in multiple formats for persons with disabilities ;
- ensure that printed material for public dissemination is published concurrently on the Internet ;
- incorporate mechanisms into on-line services for receiving and acknowledging public feedback ;

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- ensure that information published on Web sites, prior to posting of changes or updates, is recorded and archived to assure long-term retention and the preservation of institutional memory - with timely and consistent processes for doing so established in consultation with the Administration Department.

12. Media Relations

The Communications Department should cultivate proactive relations

with the media to promote public awareness and understanding of Council policies, programme, services and initiatives. The Communications Department should operate and respond effectively in a 24-hour media environment. They should be able, at short notice, to reach and inform the media on issues of importance to decision-makers and the public. They engage the media, using a variety of communication tools, including news conferences, background or technical briefings, news releases, media alerts and audio-video presentations. The Communications Department should facilitate information or interview requests from the media, and manage plans and strategies for communicating with the media. The Communications Department should consult the Executive Mayor or Municipal Manager when planning media campaigns or strategies, or when preparing a response to a media enquiry. The Communications Department should respect the authority and responsibility of the Executive Mayor/Municipal Manager, whose sign off is required before information is released to the media. The Communications Department should ensure the quality and consistency of information services provided to the media in the Municipality's three official languages. Media enquiries, whether by phone, e-mail, letter or in person, should be addressed promptly to accommodate publication deadlines. Communication specialists responsible for media relations ensure that media requests, particularly for interviews or technical information on specialized subjects, are directed to knowledgeable managers or staff designated to assist in the preparation of the response which will be signed off by the Mayor or Municipal Manager.

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13. Spokespersons

The Executive Mayor and the Municipal Manager are the principle spokespersons of the Drakenstein Municipality . They are supported in this role by appointed aides, including managers and the Communications Department. The Executive Mayor and the Municipal

Manager present and explain Council policies, priorities and decisions to the public. The Communications Department, leaving political matters to the exclusive domain of the Executive Mayor and his office, focus their communication activities on issues and matters pertaining to the policies, programme, services and initiatives of the Council.

14. Public Events and Announcements

The Communications Department should identify opportunities to inform the public about significant initiatives or contributions of the Drakenstein Municipality. Public events and announcements, including news conferences, should be arranged from time to time for communication purposes. The Communications Department should plan and co-ordinate events with Executive Mayoral staff when the Executive Mayor will attend, or with Councillors support staff when a member of the Mayoral Committee will attend. The Communications Department should ensure that Drakenstein Municipality is appropriately identified and represented at events and announcements, including those involving other participants. The Communications Department should not participate in, or lend support to, partisan events organized for political party purposes.

15. Fairs and Exhibitions

The Drakenstein Municipality should adopt a coherent and co-ordinated approach to their participation in fairs and exhibitions. Multiple departments appearing at the same event should display a unified presence that promotes common themes and messages of the Drakenstein Municipality. Departments should inform and consult the Communications Department on their exhibition plans, which needs to be approved by Communications Department.

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16. Advertising

The Communications Department, in conjunction with relevant

departments may place advertisements or purchase advertising space or time in any medium to inform People about their rights or responsibilities, about Council policies, programme, services or initiatives, or about dangers or risks to public health, safety or the environment. Advertising plans and campaigns should address the needs, concerns and language preferences of diverse communities as far as it is possible. Media buys should include the purchase of advertising space and time in organs serving the community's official languages. The placement or purchase of advertising may also be directed at audiences outside Drakenstein Municipality to promote Drakenstein Municipality interests. The Communications Department should avoid the appearance or public perception of endorsing or providing a marketing subsidy or an unfair competitive advantage to any person, organization or entity outside of Council.

The Communications Department should not advertise or publicly endorse the products or services they purchase or obtain from the private sector under contract. The Communications Department should not use public funds to purchase advertising in support of a political party. The Communications Department should suspend their advertising during general or local government elections. Advertising should only be permitted when :

- an institution is required by statute or regulation to issue a public notice for legal purposes ;
- an institution should inform the public of a danger to health, safety or the environment ; or
- an institution should post an employment or staffing notice.

Otherwise, advertising plans and activities should be held in abeyance, to ensure the integrity and efficacy of Council advertising. The Communication Department should :

- (a) ensure advertising campaigns and products are aligned with Council priorities, Council themes and messages ;

- (b) ensure that district-wide advertising campaigns are adapted to local audiences where it is deemed necessary ;
- (c) advertise in a publication that has no less than 10 000 circulation figures ;
- (d) and, or should adequately address relevant stakeholders in line with 16(a) ;
- (e) do their best for a first draft of the advert to be with Council's official spokespersons at least eight hours before printing so as to enable sign-off ;
- (f) evaluate major advertising campaigns to assess their effectiveness in achieving stated objectives and present the results to the Mayoral Committee.

17. Partnering and Collaborative Arrangement

Communication requirements should be taken into account when planning, negotiating or implementing a partnering or collaborative arrangement. Joint activities or initiatives involving another Council, a company, an organization, a group or an individual should be communicated in a manner that is fair and equitable to all parties. The parties involved in a collaborative arrangement have shared or compatible objectives, contribute resources (financial or in-kind), share in the benefits, and agree to a fair allocation of risk-taking. Official languages, corporate identity, visibility, publishing, marketing and promotional activities are among the communication requirements that have to be taken cognizance of. When informing the public or publishing information about partnering activities, the Communications Department should ensure that the contributions of all participants are fairly acknowledged and recognised. Corporate names and logos, without promotional tag lines, are appropriate identifiers for use in acknowledging the contributions of participants. The Communications Department should persuade the parties involved to also acknowledge Drakenstein Municipality's contribution in their own communications with the public. A collaborative arrangement may include advertising or promotional efforts involving the media as part of a communication strategy. However, such efforts should not be the focus of

partnering activities, but simply an aide to informing the public about them.

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18. Marketing

Marketing assists in promoting an institution's policies, programme, services and initiatives to the public. The Communications Department should integrate marketing with the communications function. This ensures that promotional activities, whether in support of specific market needs or broader policy objectives, advance the communication goals of the Council and the institution. To ensure congruence with other communication activities, the head of communications, or his or her designate, should be privy to and approve all marketing plans and strategies before they are implemented.

19. Publishing

The Communications Department should facilitate public access to their publications - all information materials, regardless of publishing medium, produced for public dissemination or for limited circulation outside of Council.

ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Executive Mayor / Municipal Manager

The Executive Mayor and the Municipal Manager, both individually and collectively, are the principal spokespersons for the Drakenstein Municipality. It is their role to provide leadership in establishing the priorities and overall themes of Council communications. Executive Mayor/Municipal Manager determine, together with their teams, their communication priorities, objectives and requirements and communicate these to the Communications Department.

2. The Mayoral Committee

The Mayoral Committee sets and monitors the Council's strategic communications direction. It ensures that emerging issues are

managed effectively throughout the Council and acts as the monitor for policy and legislative proposals, approve the communication plans of the Communications Department.

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3. Communications Staff

Communications staff manage corporate identity, advertising, publishing, marketing, environment analysis, public opinion research, media relations, event participation, and other communication activities. They oversee an institution's Web content to ensure it meets communication standards. The communications staff may be involved in the planning, management and evaluation of policies, programme, services and initiatives - providing communications advice and support in all phases of operation. The Communications Department should ensure that the activities of the communications staff conform to the requirements of this policy. Communications staff carry out all duties associated with the communications function. Advocating on behalf of those who will or should receive information, communications staff ensure the clarity and utility of information for the end user. They work collaboratively with other key personnel providing communications advice and support.

4. Monitoring

The Mayoral Committee/Municipal Manager will monitor and evaluate implementation of this policy throughout the Drakenstein Municipality. Evaluations will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the Communications Department in meeting the policy requirements and to assess the effectiveness of the policy in helping the Council to meet its objectives. Evaluation findings will contribute to a formal review of this policy to take place every three years from its effective date.

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