



# **UMJINDI MUNICIPALITY**

# **CUSTOMER CARE POLICY**

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## CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

<b>Core Business Area</b>	Corporate Services Directorate
<b>Operational Area</b>	All Directorates


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**(APPROVED BY COUNCIL UNDER ITEM FA. DATED 2007)**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Government service institutions are normally the target of remarks regarding inefficiency and lack the will to serve customers effectively. The local government sphere has not escaped this perception. We have however entered an era where this situation has to be addressed and services delivered. We have reached a point where a consumer becomes a customer. People have customer needs and expectations to be satisfied. It is against this background that the Umjindi Local Municipality has adopted this policy.

## **2. VISION**

To serve our customers by ensuring excellent service delivery at all times and under all circumstances.

## **3. MISSION**

We will provide a reliable, responsive, competent, accessible, courteous, multi optional, affordable quality service and treat our customers with empathy.

## **4. OBJECTIVE**

- 4.1 To restore and promote the culture of paying for services rendered and used, through a fair and equitable customer care policy.
- 4.2 To protect the Municipal services users, who are paying for their services and to encourage those not paying to do so in the interest of sustainable services delivery
- 4.3 To define a manageable customer care framework to ensure enrolling of consumers into the objectives of the municipality

## **5. OVERVIEW**

A municipality as a service authority and in most cases also the service provider has never in the past been very strong in the customer care environment. The days of merely proving a service because everybody has to make use of it has long gone by. Political expectations have been created with promises of services at acceptable

levels in all communities. All the customers in a specific area cannot afford the services and specific arrangements needs to be applied in these cases. This service delivery also carries the tag of customer care and quality specifications. The Municipal Systems Act specifically refers to these requirements in clause 95.

## **6. DEFINITION OF CUSTOMER CARE.**

“CRM” – or Customer Relation’s Management – is a comprehensive approach that provides seamless co-ordination between sales, customer service, marketing, support, and other customer facing functions. A successful CRM initiative requires the integration of people, processes, and technology to maximize relationships with customers, distribution –channel partners, employees and suppliers.

This definition is fit for private enterprises where competitions for the customer takes place and every customer based company’s engaged in fierce marketing campaigns to establish brands and specific products. In a largely monopolistic environment regulation determines the rules of customer care. As service providers however become more and more customer orientated and provide good efficient services and most of all communicate this to a customer, the awareness should make it much easier to manage revenue for services rendered. Revenue protection enters a whole new dimension under these circumstances.

## **7. MUNICIPAL SYSTEMS ACT CHAPTER 9, CLAUSE 95**

Clause 95 of the systems act describes customer care actions to be taken by Municipalities. One can clearly see that this act sets minimum service levels and not necessarily business type customer care actions.

“In relation to the levying of rates and other taxes by a municipality and the charging of fess for municipal services, a municipality must, within its financial and administrative capacity.”

- Establish a sound customer care management system that aims to create a positive and reciprocal relation between persons liable for these payments and the municipality, and where applicable, a service provider;
- Establish mechanisms for users of services and ratepayers to give feedback to the municipality or other service providers regarding the quality of the services and the performance of the service provider;

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- Take responsible steps to ensure that users of services are informed of the costs involved in service provision, the reasons for the payment of service fees, and the manner in which monies raised from the service are utilized;
- Where the consumption of services has to be measured, take reasonable steps to ensure that the consumption by individual users of services is measured through accurate and verifiable metering systems;
- Ensure that persons liable for payments, receive regular and accurate accounts that indicate the basis for calculating the amounts due;
- Provide accessible mechanisms for those persons to query or verify accounts and metered consumption, and appeal procedures which allow such persons to receive prompt redress for inaccurate accounts’
- Provide accessible mechanisms for dealing with complaints from such persons, together with prompt replies and corrective action by the municipality;
- Provide mechanisms to monitor the response time and efficiency in complying with the above;
- Provide accessible pay points and other mechanisms for settling accounts of for making pre-payments for services.

From the above it is clear that these requirements are absolutely the minimum and can by no means be compared to major corporations, however by implementing these very basic features well, positive progress can be made towards better and managed customer relations.

## **8. POLITICAL EXPECTATIONS**

The Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, on the occasion of the presentation of his budget speech to the nation, said the following:

“ Development is not only about large scale infrastructure projects, wide reaching income support or high profile health campaigns for many “real” developments happens when peoples access to services and opportunities within their own communities improve. When they are able to open the door to their own house, drink water that is clean and safe from disease, switch on an electrical light, and watch their children kick a ball around the community soccer ground. Building a better life for all is therefore a challenge that we share with communities”

The municipality share the above sentiment as expressed, because the municipality is committed in creating better living conditions and opportunities to be self-sufficient.

## **9. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

- 9.1 Achieving higher customer satisfaction by building long terms loyalty.
- 9.2  Achieving higher levels of employee satisfaction by providing good training, motivation, two-way communication and the necessary tools, and endorsing and rewarding excellent performance.
- 9.3 Improving business efficiency and performance by providing a reliable, responsive, competent, accessible, courteous, multi-optional, confidential and secure service.
- 9.4 Increasing revenue by rendering an efficient, effective and economical service.
- 9.5 The effective dissemination of information through the application of audit surveys, employee feedback systems and customer feedback systems.
- 9.6 Installing a customer orientated culture throughout the Municipality.
- 9.7 Developing a customer care policy
- 9.8 Developing a uniform complaints procedure.
- 9.9 Producing a customer care guide.

## **10. DELIVERABLES IDENTIFIED**

- 10.1  As the corporate body for customer care, acting as the Municipality's voice regarding the standard of service delivery and being the first point of contact for the public.
- 10.2 Co-ordinating complaints of a multi disciplinary nature and making better interaction between departments possible by consolidating comments and compiling appropriate replies to customers.
- 10.3 Acting as facilitator between various departments of the Municipality and customers / complaints by indicating and co-ordinating meetings between relevant parties with the aim of resolving sensitive and complex issues.

- 10.4  Managing the customer care centre's with a view to resolving any type of municipal matter.
- 10.5 Conducting regular surveys to determine the perceptions of the community and using this information as an aid to render a more effective service and determine points of concern.
- 10.6 Enhancing the perception among ratepayers that the municipality gives high priority to customer satisfaction by co-ordinating personal visits / inspections to high problem sited.
- 10.7 Conducting personal interviews with customers regarding their complaints.
- 10.8 Establishing a uniform complaints procedure for the municipality.
- 10.9 Continually disseminating info to the public e.g. correct telephone numbers to be used for the municipality, e-mail addresses etc.
- 10.10  Ensuring that all municipal forms and directives are compiled in plain unambiguous language that caters for the linguistic needs of the community, with due observance of proficiency in written or spoken medium. Acting as a communication channel between the Municipality, councilors and ward communities in respect of complaints and enquiries.
- 10.11 Compiling a crisis communication plan for customer care.
- 10.12  Assisting in benchmarking reaction times to the various categories of complaints / enquiries.
- 10.13 Fostering a service orientated culture.
- 10.14 Ensuring that designated staff receives training to meet the changing demands on the Municipality as a provider of excellent customer services.
- 10.15 Identifying the training needs for all municipal front desk staff to ensure a professional, customer friendly environment for all Umjindi residents.
- 10.16 Identifying recurring complaints and proactively seeking solutions with the providers of such services.

## **11. CUSTOMER CARE CYCLE**

- 1.1 The Municipality provides services to the consumers.
- 1.2 Afford opportunities for customers queries to be addressed.
- 1.3 Implement the follow up process of query resolution.
- 1.4 Ensure community interaction outside the office, preliminary cut off lists to key stakeholders and ward councilors.
- 1.5 Implement processes and procedures to assist customers and ensure adequate processes to produce accurate and credible accounts.
- 1.6 Bill for the services rendered.
- 1.7 Issue accounts to consumers.
- 1.8 Remind customers by issuing notices to settle accounts.
- 1.9 Issue final notices to non-paying consumers, a further opportunity to the consumer to either raise queries or to make arrangements for account payment.
- 1.10 Consult with non-paying consumers through house visits, as part of the final demand process and actual credit control action and enforcement of credit policy.
- 1.11 Final step is to restrict or disconnect actual services to the consumer, with clear municipal input via the customer care and debt collecting policies.

## **12. CUSTOMER CARE SERVICE CHARTER.**

The charter is binding on the Municipality, all politicians, and all employees associated with the Municipality and –

- 12.1  Shall be willing to take messages should a client wish to speak to a specific official who might not be readily available and ensure that the relevant official receives the message.
- 12.2 Shall at all times be friendly, polite and professional when answering telephone calls.

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- 12.3  Shall confirm telephonic discussions should the matter necessitates that it be confirmed in writing.
- 12.4 Shall respond to telephonic enquiries promptly and make follow-ups when we had undertaken to respond at a later stage.
- 12.5  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.
- 12.6  Shall serve and execute our duties with due diligence and honesty.
- 12.7  Shall at all times be accessible to members of the public.
- 12.8  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.
- 12.9  Shall not unduly disclose information privileged to the municipality to outside parties without prior approval.
- 12.10  Shall conduct ourselves in a professional and ethical manner and promote the image of the Municipality.
- 12.11  Shall strive to be professional in approach when dealing with members of the public
- 12.12 Shall be prompt in response on correspondence requiring written response, reasonably within five working days.
- 12.13  Shall treat all members of public equally, without distinction of race, religion, gender or social orientation.
- 12.14  Shall observe official working hours in order not to prejudice or inconvenience members of the public.
- 12.15  Shall honour all bona fide contractual obligations entered into on behalf of the District Municipality.
- 12.16  Shall, upon enquiry by a member of the public, furnish information regarding the status of projects executed by the Municipality.
- 12.17  Shall at all times observe the Code of Conduct for employees as contemplated in Schedule 2 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000.

### **13. WARD COUNCILLOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

The ward councilors play a vital role in the current dispensation to communicate the expectations of consumers in a specific ward to council as well as the services departments or units. The ward councilor is also directly responsible to ensure that communication is forwarded to consumers in respect of this policy and to further ensure that consumers are paying for services received. The councilors will actively promote payment of services rendered to the consumers in their respective wards and strive to create a culture of payment for services through ward committee members.

### **14. INTERPRETATION OF THE POLICY**

- 14.1 All words contained in this policy shall have a direct grammatical meaning unless the definition or context indicates otherwise.
- 14.2 The dispute on interpretation of this policy shall be declared in writing by any party concerned.
- 14.3 The office of the Municipal Manager shall give a final interpretation of this policy in case of a written dispute.
- 14.4 If the party concerned is not satisfied with the interpretation of the policy, a dispute may then be referred to the South African Local Government Bargaining Council.

### **15. PERMANENT / TEMPORARY WAIVER OF THIS POLICY**

- 15.1 This policy may be partly or wholly waived by the Municipal Council on temporary or permanent basis.
- 15.2 Notwithstanding clause 15.1 the Municipal Manager may under circumstances of emergency temporarily waive this policy subject to reporting of such waiver to Council.

### **16. AMENDMENT AND/OR ABOLITION OF THIS POLICY**

- 16.1 This may be partly amended or wholly amended by the Council
- 16.2 This policy may be partly or wholly abolished by the Council

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- 16.3 Violation of or non-compliance with this policy will give a just cause for disciplinary steps to be taken.
- 16.4 It will be the responsibility of all Managers, Supervisors, Executive Committee and Council to enforce compliance with this policy.

## **17. SUSPENSION OF THIS POLICY**

- 17.1 This policy may only be repealed by Council
- 17.2 This policy may only be suspended by Council