



# **UMZINYATHI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY**

## **Customer Care and Billing Management Policy**

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## 1) Purpose

- a) Section 95 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, no 32 of 2000 (hereinafter referred to as the MSA) requires the Municipality to:
  - i) establish a sound customer management system;
  - ii) establish mechanisms for users of services and ratepayers to give feedback to the municipality regarding the quality of services;
  - iii) Take reasonable steps to ensure that users of services are informed of the costs of service provision, the reason for the payment of service fees, and the manner in which monies are utilised;
  - iv) Take reasonable steps to ensure the accurate measurement of consumption of services;
  - v) Ensure the receipt by persons liable for payments of regular and accurate accounts that indicate the basis for calculating the amounts due;
  - vi) Provide accessible mechanisms for those persons to query or verify accounts and metered consumption, and appeal procedures which allow for prompt redress for inaccurate accounts;
  - vii) Provide accessible mechanisms for dealing with complaints, prompt replies and corrective action;
  - viii) Provide mechanisms to monitor response times to such complaints;
  - ix) Provide accessible pay points and other mechanisms for settling accounts or for making pre-payments for services.

## 2) Definitions

In this policy:

- a) Unless the context clearly requires a different interpretation, any word or expression which has been defined in the By-law shall bear the same definition when used in this policy;
- b) Unless the context clearly requires a different interpretation:
  - i) “The MSA” shall mean the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000;
  - ii) “The By-law” shall mean the Municipality’s By-law which has been adopted in pursuant to Section 98 of the MSA to give effect to this policy;
  - iii) “Centre” shall mean the Customer Care Centre established in accordance with this policy;
  - iv) “Customer Care Centre” shall mean enquiries desk and call centre;
  - v) “Council” shall mean the Council of the UMZINYATHI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY;
  - vi) “Customer” shall mean any person to whom the Municipality supplies services;
  - vii) “The municipality” shall mean the UMZINYATHI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY.

### **3) Customer Care**

- a) Through this policy the municipality's aim is to ensure that a customer will be able to contact the municipality conveniently and will be treated courteously, promptly and fairly. The customer will receive a clear response to any service request or enquiry within a stated period of time as defined in Section 7 of this policy.

#### **b) Customer Care Centre**

- i) The municipality shall endeavour to establish a Customer Care Centre which shall create a positive and reciprocal relationship between customers liable for payments and the municipality.
- ii) In particular, the Centre shall:
  - (1) Serve as the conduit for receiving feedback regarding the quality of services, and to this end, shall receive, process, analyse and report to the Chief Financial Officer on such feedback;
  - (2) Provide information to customers on the costs involved in service provision, the reasons for the payment of service fees, and the manner in which monies raised from services are utilised;
  - (3) Serve as the point at which queries regarding accounts may be submitted and shall deal with such queries;
  - (4) Serve as the point at which complaints may be submitted, and shall respond to such complaints.
- iii) The Centre shall be housed in an appropriate location and shall be properly equipped to deal with the matters referred to in A telephonically, by mail, e-mail and directly with the public.

#### **4) Communications**

- a) The Municipality shall promote communications and feedback channels as follows:
- b) Copies of this policy may be obtained from the Municipality at a cost determined by the Council from time to time and will be made available by general publication and on specific request, and will also be available for perusal at the municipality's offices and the official web site.
- c) The municipality will endeavour to distribute regular information regarding customer care and debt collection issues.
- d) Ward councillors will be required to hold regular ward meetings, at which care and debt collection issues will be given prominence.
- e) The press will be encouraged to give prominence to the municipality's customer care and debt collection issues, and will be invited to Council or Committee meetings where these are discussed.
- f) In particular, the mechanisms referred to in b, c and d shall be used to convey to customers information relating to the costs involved in service provision, and how funds received for the payment of services are utilised, and may where necessary employ the services of local media to convey such information.

#### **5) Metering**

- a) The Municipality will endeavour to ensure that meters are read monthly, and as close to the same date as is practical in each month.
- b) The municipality shall ensure that meters accurately record consumption.
- c) If a meter is not read in any month, the municipality will estimate the consumption for the month in question, and to that end, where possible, it will base its estimate on the average consumption for the six preceding months. Where the next account based on an actual reading results in a need to adjust account for any excess amount or shortfall in the estimated account such adjustment will be done in the following month.
- d) Customers may request verification of meter readings.
- e) Where a customer is still not satisfied with consumption raised, after verification of meter readings, they can request for meter testing upon paying the relevant fees in terms of the municipality's tariff of charges.

## **6) Accounts and Billing**

- a) Customers will receive accounts on a monthly basis for services supplied and for basic charges.
- b) Where applicable and possible all the services supplied to a property the account shall be consolidated to for all such services.
- c) All accounts shall reflect how the amount thereof is made up and calculated, and shall include, where applicable, an indication of the units consumed.
- d) Accounts shall be understandable and accurate.
- e) The due date for payment shall be indicated on each account.
- f) Accounts shall be sent to the address of the customer last recorded with the Municipality.
- g) Changes to customer personal details shall be done upon written request or information received by municipality during any data cleansing exercise.

## **7) Queries and appeals**

- a) A customer who believes that any account incorrectly reflects the amount owed by him or her may lodge a query regarding such account with the Centre.
- b) Such query must be in writing and must specify the nature of the query and the manner and extent to which the customer believes the amount stated in the account differs from that actually owed, and the basis for such belief.
- c) Such query must be lodged before the due date for payment of the account.
- d) Such query must be accompanied by the payment of the average of the last three months' accounts where history of the account is available or an estimated amount provided by the municipality before payment due date.
- e) Any subsequent accounts shall become due and payable by due date and any failure to make such payments will render the customer liable for credit control processes.
- f) The centre shall endeavour to resolve the query within 30 days or advise consumer if it takes longer.
- g) The centre will register the query and provide the customer with a reference number. The customer must ensure that a reference number is given for any unresolved query as it serves as proof of having lodged a query for to facilitate follow-ups and escalation of the query if not resolved within stipulated time as per f above.

- h) For purposes of resolving the query, the Centre must diligently make all necessary inquiries with the relevant departments, and in accordance with the information obtained in the course of such inquiries, shall determine the amount actually payable and shall either:
  - i) Confirm the amount stated in the account; or
  - ii) Accede to the customer's query and adjust the account according to the amount claimed by the customer; or
  - iii) Partially accede to the customer's query and adjust the account by a different amount.
- i) Should the customer not be satisfied with the determination of the Centre, he or she may appeal to the Municipal Manager or Enquiries Task Team against such determination.
- j) Such appeal must be made in writing and lodged with the municipality within 21 (twenty-one) days after the notification of the Centre's determination, and must:
  - i) Set out the reasons for the appeal; and
  - ii) Be accompanied by any security determined for the testing of a measuring device, if applicable.
- k) Upon receipt of the appeal, the Municipal Manager shall make such inquiries considered necessary and endeavour to determine the amount actually owed within 30(thirty) days of the appeal being made.
- l) In accordance with such determination the Municipal Manager or Enquiries Task Team shall:
  - i) Confirm the amount stated in the account; or
  - ii) Accede to the customer's appeal and adjust the account according to the amount claimed by the customer; or
  - iii) Partially accede to the customer's appeal and adjust the account by a different amount.
- m) The determination of the Municipal Manager or Enquiries Task Team shall be final and binding, subject, however, to the outcome of any court proceedings instituted by or against the customer in respect of the disputed amount.
- n) The customer shall be notified in writing of any determination of the Centre or the Municipal Manager or Enquiries Task Team.

## **8) Service Complaints**

- a) Quality of Service at the Centre
  - i) Should a customer have any complaint about any service rendered by the Municipality, he or she may lodge such complaint in writing, setting out full particulars of the complaint at the Centre.
  - b) The centre shall investigate the matter and if it finds that the complaint is justified, shall propose such remedial action as in the circumstances is reasonable and practical to apply.

- c) Such remedial action shall, however, be ratified by the Municipal Manager before it is implemented.
- d) The response time and efficiency in dealing with any complaint shall be monitored by Chief Financial Officer.
- e) Every effort must be made to resolve any complaint in the shortest possible time.
- f) The customer shall be notified in writing of the outcome of any investigation and any remedial action ratified by the Municipal Manager.
- g) Our response time are in line with our service level standard, refer to annexure A

## 9) Payment Facilities

- a) The municipality has established the following accessible pay points and other mechanisms for settling accounts:
  - i. Direct deposit to Water Services Bank Account (FNB);
  - ii. Third - party payments such as:
    - Easypay website
    - Post office
    - Pick n Pay
    - Lewis
    - Boxer
    - Shoprite
    - Checkers
- b) The Municipality shall give due regard to the demand for and preference of the community for any particular mechanism and the location thereof.
- c) The municipality may in terms of section 103 of Act:
  - i) with the consent of a customer approach an employer to secure a debit or stop order arrangement to deduct any amount owed from that persons salary; and
  - ii) Provide for special incentives as contemplated in section 103 of the Systems Act.

## 10) Commencement

- a) This policy shall commence on 1 July 2013.



## **Annexure A: Cont... Customer Care and Billing Management Policy**

### **1. OVERVIEW**

UMZINYATHI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY Service Charter has been put in place with a view to ensuring that public expectations of service delivery are matched by measurable performance standards.

This document is being drafted with an intention of ensuring that:

- The relationship that exists between the service provider, and the customer or recipient of service, is enhanced
- Areas of dissatisfaction are reduced,
- In instances of disputes, the process to resolve disputes are clear
- Unrealistic expectations are eliminated,
- The escalation producers in the event there are differences between the service provider and customers are explained.
- The members of the public are made aware of how the public can access the UMZINYATHI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY.

This document further intends highlighting:

- How effectiveness will be tracked,
- How information about service effectiveness will be reported and addressed,
- How to prevent poor customer relationships,
- How to keep client relationships healthy as a result of voluntary compliance from adherence to published service level standards whilst simultaneously ensuring that the rights of the customer are upheld.

### **2. OVERALL APPROACH**

This document serves to set out:

- How UMZINYATHI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY will provide assistance and support to you , our customer,
- The standards of service that you, our customer, can expect,
- How you can help us deliver an effective service and make suggestions for further improvement,
- The channels that you, the customer, have at your disposal in case you want to communicate dissatisfaction about our service delivery standards.

#### 4. LEVELS OF SERVICE AVAILABLE

<i>Water</i>	<i>Sanitation</i>
<p>In order to make water available to customers at affordable cost,</p> <p>various levels of service are offered to domestic customers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Full pressure water supply fed directly to the household from UMZINYATHI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY supply network.</li> <li>➤ 200 litres of water per day available to indigents and every domestic customer in Umzinyathi equivalent to 6 000 free litres of water per month.</li> <li>➤ Standpipes, BOREHOLES AND SPRINGS that are provided to supply informal and rural communities as an interim measure</li> </ul>	<p>The accepted levels for sanitation are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Conventional waterborne sanitation – connection to sewerage infrastructure.</li> <li>➤ Waterborne sanitation with on-site disposal – septic tank.</li> <li>➤ Water with on-site collection and off-site disposal e.g. conservancy tanks with emptying disposal by tanker</li> </ul>

#### 5. FREE BASIC SERVICES

<i>Water</i>	<i>Sanitation</i>
<p>All customers receive the first 6kl month free of charge, with step tariff charge. All indigent customers receive 6kl free. All water supplied via. Standpipes, boreholes and springs is provided free of charge.</p>	<p>All customers are charged sewer linked to water</p>

#### 6. SERVICES AND SERVICE LEVEL STANDARDS

ACCOUNTS		
SERVICE \SERVICE PRODUCT	SERVICE LEVEL	WHERE PUBLIC CAN GET THE SERVICE FROM
Registration of New Account	Immediate	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Termination of Existing Account	Immediate	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Transfer of Account from one customer to the next	Immediate	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
<p>High Accounts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Leaks : advise consumer on method to check</li> <li>❖ Incorrect Meter Readings: Investigation</li> </ul>	Immediate	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office

Crossed Meters	14 days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Flow Limiter Applications	3 days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Restrictions, Disconnections & Reconnections	Immediate	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Copy statements.	Immediate	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Balance Enquiries	Immediate	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Multi-Metering	Immediate	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Credit Control	Immediate	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Raising of Waste Water & Pollution Charges	Daily	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Termination of industrial Waste Water customers	7 days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Response to trade effluent charge queries	7 days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Processing of applications to discharge industrial trade effluent to sewer and\ or via road tanker	7days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office

## TECHNICAL

SERVICE \ SERVICE PRODUCT	SERVICE LEVEL	WHERE SERVICE CAN GET SERVICE FROM
General Technical Queries regarding water borne sewerage/water reticulation.	3 working days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Process application for meter re-sites and tests	14working days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Inspection of Properties to location nearest Water Main, check for number, and boundary pegs in order to facilitate new water connections	48 hours	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Install urban domestic water connections = 25mm to individual consumers multi-dwelling units and housing projects	7 days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office

Install rural domestic water connections = 25mm to individual consumers multi-dwelling units and housing projects	21 days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Install large domestic, commercial, individual water connections =25 mm including sprinkler and fire connection.	14 days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Read all consumer's (domestic & commercial) water meters	Monthly 100% reading 100% accuracy	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Carry out field investigations\ check meter readings where required (verification)	3 days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Estimated readings when unable to read.	Monthly	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Maintenance of water meters and chambers	48 hours	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Tracing of leaks related to water meters	48 hours	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Location of buried water meters	5 days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Raising and re-siting of water meters	48 hours	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Change of faulty meters	48 hours	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Investigations into general water and account queries	7 days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office
Answering of telephone calls	80% of calls within 1 minute, 3 rings	Call Centre & UMzinyathi Municipality
Reply to Correspondence, letters, faxes	7 working days	uMzinyathi District Municipality Main Office