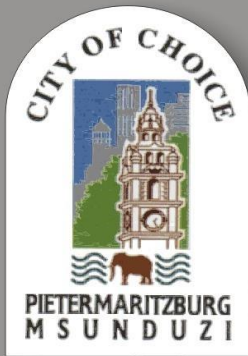


MSUNDUZI MUNICIPALITY



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The Msunduzi Municipality

APPROVED CUSTOMER CARE POLICY 2021/2022

CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

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1. PREAMBLE

The Msunduzi Municipality is committed to ensuring that Customer Service Excellence is integral to planning, resourcing and delivery of all Council services. This is confirmation that Council has Customer Care Service at its heart.

The intention is to improve on customer loyalty and customer satisfaction within the Municipality by placing all people at the centre of development. Whenever customers have contact with the Municipality, they will consistently experience excellent service standards. By so doing, the Municipality wants to display its commitment to the principle of People First and ensure that service excellence is an integral part of the planning and delivery of all municipal services to its people.

Batho Pele Principles call for the setting up of Service Standards, defining outputs and targets and benchmarking performance indicators against national standards. Similarly, it also calls for the introduction of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and structures to measure progress on a continuous basis.

2. PURPOSE

Every business is different but one thing they all have in common is the need to keep customers happy and to keep them coming back. The City of Msunduzi aims to provide consistent service excellence whenever customers make contact with the municipality.

2.1 The purpose of this Policy therefore is:

2.1.1 To ensure that all staff members uphold the Principles of Batho Pele as provided in the White Paper for the Transformation of the Public Service;

2.1.2 To provide quality service to all stakeholders interacting with the Municipality;

2.1.3 To ensure that customers are provided with the relevant information as and when is needed in the appropriate format;

2.1.4 To ensure customer complaints are addressed promptly, timeously and to the full satisfaction of the customer;

2.1.5 To ensure that customers, whether internal and external receive consistent and fair treatment at all times;

2.1.6 To reduce financial and time costs incurred arising from poor customer service resulting in repeat services to customers;

2.1.7 To equip staff with knowledge and competencies that would continuously enhance the service standards according to changing customer needs; and

2.1.8 To transform the municipality into a more customer focused organisation.

This Customer Care Policy should be read together with the Customer Service Charter that incorporates Customer Service Standards that define deliverables for each service delivery unit and is a pledge by the municipality to its customers to deliver excellent services.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Account query

A question, especially one expressing doubt or requesting information about an account.

3.2 Batho Pele

It is an initiative to get municipal officials to be service oriented, to strive for excellence and to commit to continuous service delivery improvements.

It is a transparent mechanism to hold municipal officials accountable for the type of services they deliver. It is a citizen-oriented approach to service delivery.

3.3 Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

CFO refers to the person so designated in terms of Section 80 (2)(a) of the Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act No. 56 of 2003) or any person duly authorized to act on behalf of such person;

3.4 City Manager

A City Manager is the head of administration and an accounting officer of the Municipality and is appointed in terms of Section 82 of the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No 117 of 1998)

3.5 Customers

These are residents and businesses whose main contact with the City is through the consumption of municipal services, the City therefore needs to begin to build relationships with citizens and communities. These include Councillors, municipal officials and other stakeholders.

3.6 Customer Service

It is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase. The perception of success of such interactions is dependent on employees "who shall adjust themselves to the personality of the guest.

3.7 Customer Care

It is the task of looking after customers and ensuring their satisfaction with one's business and its goods or services. Modern consumers are aware of their rights to a high standard of customer care thus making Customer care very important to us.

3.8 Customer Service Standards

This is the level and quality of the municipal services that Municipal customers will receive and are informed of such so that they are aware of what to expect.

3.9 Customer Service Charter

A Customer Service Charter provides a framework for defining service delivery standards, how they are delivered to customers, the rights of customers, what are the expected outcomes from a customer's perspective and how complaints from customers will be handled.

3.10 Debtor

Means any person indebted to the municipality.

3.11 Downgrade/ upgrade

To downgrade is to reduce to a lower grade, less power, rank, or level of importance.

To upgrade is to raise to a higher standard, in particular improve by adding or replacing components.

3.12 Monitoring

This involves the continuous collecting, analysing, and reporting data on inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts as well as external factors, in a way that supports effective management and continuous improvement in performance.

3.13 Municipality

Means the Msunduzi Municipality and its successors in law and includes the Council of that municipality or any other body acting by virtue of any power delegated to it in terms of legislation, as well as any official to whom the Executive Committee who has delegated any powers and duties with regard to this policy;

3.14 Evaluation

This is the periodic and systematic collection and objective analysis of evidence on public policies, programmes, projects, functions and organizations to assess issues such as relevance, performance (effectiveness and efficiency) and value for money and recommend ways forward. Evaluation is critical for generating in-depth evidence for improving performance and decision-making.

3.15 Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993

To provide for the health and safety of persons at work and for the health and safety of persons in connection with the use of plant and machinery; the protection of persons other than persons at work against hazards to health and safety arising out of or in connection with the activities of persons at work; to establish an advisory council for occupational health and safety; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

3.16 Performance monitoring

Performance monitoring is a formalised system for measuring the performance of an organisation or service

3.17 Promotion of Access to Information Act 3 of 2000

To give effect to the constitutional right of access to any information held by the State and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights; and to provide for matters connected therewith

3.18 Quotation

Quotation is a formal statement setting out the estimated cost for a particular job or service.

3.19 Retrofit

In the context of this policy, retrofit refers to the process of converting a credit electricity meter to a prepaid electricity meter.

4. VISION

By 2030, Pietermaritzburg will be a safe, vibrant city in which to live, learn, raise a family, work, play and do business.

5. MISSION

To ensure that the Municipality function effectively and in a sustainable manner in order to deliver services of excellence to the community.

6. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Staff members and Management at all levels, Councillors as well as Ward Committee Members of Msunduzi Municipality.

7. VALUES

In order to achieve Customer Service Excellence, Msunduzi Municipality will continually remind its staff of the core values that should guide all interaction with customers, with special emphasis on Front Line Staff to have a common set of values which inter alia includes:

- Efficiency
- Professionalism
- Commitment
- Respect
- Honesty, Integrity and transparency
- Innovation
- Equity and fairness
- Passion, compassion and dignity
- Good Customer Care
- Service Excellence
- Mutual trust and understanding
- Courtesy

8. WHO ARE THE CITY'S CUSTOMERS?

These are residents and businesses whose main contact with the City is through the consumption of municipal services, and it is here that the City needs to begin to build relationships with citizens and communities. These include Councillors, municipal officials and other stakeholders.

It is necessary to be responsive to the needs of the consumers and strive to improve customer management and service provision which is critical to building an environment conducive to economic and social development.

9. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To achieve customer service excellence, the Municipality's value system is based upon the Batho Pele Principles which is a Sesotho adage meaning 'People First'.

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9.1 Consultation

Customers shall be consulted about the level and quality of the municipal services they receive and, wherever possible, be given a choice about the services that are offered. We can only assume to know what our customers want. The only way we can find out for certain is by asking them. This can be done through surveys, questionnaires, meetings, suggestion boxes, izimbizo and by talking to our customers. It's important to report back to customers so they know what to expect, and to our staff so they know what is expected from us.

9.2 Service Standards

Customers shall be told what level and quality of the municipal services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect. We commit to the highest possible service standards and quality throughout the City. The standards we set are the tools we can use to measure our performance, and therefore need to be realistic depending on available resources. We should also be able to measure these standards so that everyone can see if they are being met.

9.3 Access

All citizens shall have equal access to the services to which they are entitled to. There is much more involved when referring to access. It means making it easy for our customers to benefit from the services we provide. Easy access can be made possible by: -having wheelchair ramps, disabled parking bays, taking our services out to the community. Staff attitude may determine how approachable your component/directorate/department is.

9.4 Courtesy

Our customers shall be treated with courtesy, consideration and professionalism at all times.

9.5 Information

Customers shall be given full, accurate information about the municipal services they are entitled to receive.

9.6 Openness and transparency

Customers shall be told how the municipality is run, how much it costs, and who is in charge.

9.7 Redress

If the promised standard of service is not delivered, customers shall be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when the complaints are made, customers shall receive a sympathetic, positive response.

9.8 Value for money

We shall consistently strive to embrace principles of good governance and provide services economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money.

9.9 Encouraging Innovation and Rewarding Excellence

We shall encourage innovation as it can be new ways of providing better service, cutting costs, improving conditions, streamlining and generally making changes which tie in with the spirit of Batho Pele. It is also about rewarding the staff who "go the extra mile" in making it all happen.

9.10 Customer Impact

We shall look at the benefits we have provided for our customers both internal and external and ensure that all our customers are aware of and are exercising their rights in terms of the Batho Pele principles.

9.11 Leadership and Strategic Direction

Msunduzi Municipality leaders must create an atmosphere which allows for creativity. Management must ensure that goals are set and that planning is done.

10. CUSTOMER CARE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

This Municipality aims to please its customers by ensuring that each time they interact with it, they would be able to do so conveniently and that they would be treated courteously, promptly and fairly. It is committed to ensuring customers that they would receive clear responses to their service requests or enquiries within a stated period of time as would be stipulated in the Customer Service Standards as well as Customer Services Charter.

Customer Care is therefore regarded as:

- Treating customers with courtesy, dignity and respect;
- Treating customers in manner they would like to be treated;
- Engaging customers in their language of preference or in English where it is impossible to engage them in their preferred language, as English is used a medium language in South Africa;
- Providing a good quality service in a friendly, efficient and helpful manner;
- Giving customers the information they need and providing an explanation if the service is not available and;
- Keeping customers informed of progress in addressing their complaints, requests or enquiries.

11. APPLICATION FOR SERVICES AND SERVICE AGREEMENTS

- 11.1 Only the owner or pending rate payer shall enter into a service agreement for the provision of municipal services. However, in the event that the owner is not resident within the municipal area, an agent may with a proxy enter into a service agreement in the name of the owner or the tenant may sign surety for the debt pending the finalisation of the winding up of the Estate.
- 11.2 The only exceptions to (9.1) above are individuals and businesses with lease agreements, who lease properties from the Municipality, will be allowed to open an account in the name of the lessee of the property.
- 11.3 Directors of companies, members of Close Corporation and Trustees of Trust shall sign personal surety ships with the Municipality when opening services accounts.
- 11.4 A new Service Agreement will only be entered into in respect of a property, once all amounts due, which include the current account due in respect of that property and all other properties owned by the respective owner, are settled in full or a suitable payment arrangement has been made by the owner of the property.

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- 11.5 Where the owner has failed to enter into an agreement for the provision of services; the owner responsible for the payment of rates on the property will be billed for the consumption of all municipal service charges applicable to the property.
- 11.6 An occupier who illegally consumes services without a valid service agreement will be subject to disconnection and/or removal of the service and may be prosecuted.
- 11.7 Application forms are available at the municipal offices and the application process should occur at least ten (10) working days prior to taking occupation of the premises. This will ensure that services are available when occupation is taken. Failure to adhere to the timeframe may result in customers not having the services available when occupation is taken. Once the application has been approved, a service agreement will be entered into and services will commence.
- 11.8 The service agreement shall set out the conditions under which the services are provided and shall require the signatories thereto to agree to abide by the provisions of the Municipalities Credit Control and Debt Collection Policy and Bylaws.
- 11.9 The Municipality will render the first account after the first billing cycle following the date of signing the service agreement or as soon as is administratively possible.
- 11.10 The owner of the property shall be jointly and severally liable with the consumer in respect of all amounts due for the municipal services provided to the property.
- 11.11 Where the purpose for or extent to which any municipal service used is changed, the onus and obligation is on the owner to advise the Municipality of such a change. Council may consolidate any separate accounts of persons liable for payments to the Municipality in terms of Chapter 9 of the Municipal Systems Act.

12. CHANGES TO AND OR TERMINATION TO THE SERVICE AGREEMENT

- 12.1 A property owner or account holder who intends varying the service agreement must do so by submitting the application to the finance unit of Msunduzi Municipality. The Municipality will allow only one change per any 12 months' period. During the scale change, the active peak demand shall be used for billing until it lapses after its 12 months' anniversary.
- 12.2 The Municipality will notify the customer in writing of the decision in terms of downgrade of supply. The Municipality reserves the right to approve or decline the application.
- 12.3 The property owner or account holder should take it into account the fact that when they apply for the upgrade after 12 months of the approved downgrade, their application shall be treated as a new application for capacity increase, this application will therefore undergo the normal upgrade process.
- 12.4 The application will incur cost to property owner or account holder and it may depend on the availability of capacity at that stage.

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12.5 Any new installation together with its installation will be regarded as first application in this regard and no change will be allowed until the first 12 months

12.6 A property owner or account holder must terminate an agreement with the Municipality for the provision of any municipal services by notice in writing (completing the relevant termination and account closure forms of the Municipality) not less than seven (7) working days before the required termination date.

12.7 Where the owner has requested the termination of supply and the supply remains terminated for 12 months, the Municipality reserves the right to remove the whole electricity service or only the metering installation. This includes properties with more than one meter whilst other meters are sitting idle in the meter box, such meters shall be removed from the consumer's property and the installation downgraded accordingly.

12.8 Should the customer require the services in the future, such service request shall be treated as a new or additional installation.

12.9 Should the service account(s) or the meter sit idle for longer than 12 months, the Municipality shall by virtue of time lapsed, terminate the services to that property, remove the whole electricity service or only the metering installation. This includes properties with more than one meter, such meters shall be removed from the consumer's property and the installation downgraded accordingly. Should the customer require the services in the future, such service request shall be treated as a new or additional installation. It should be noted that the balance owing shall still be recoverable from the customer.

13. DOWNGRADING/ UPGRADING OF AMPS

13.1 Where a customer has an existing supply and wants to upgrade either from a single phase to a three phase or bulk to three phase/ single supply, an application form would need to be completed.

13.2 This shall then be treated in the same way as normal applications, noting that any upgrade to supply would require the applicable deposit as per the tariff of charges.

13.3 Alterations to supply (upgrade/ downgrade) shall only be done by the owner of the property.

13.4 Written request shall be submitted to the municipality for the required downgrade or upgrade.

13.5 The municipality shall not be liable for any "overcharge" due to downgrading without informing the municipality

14. RETROFIT (Conversion of a credit meter to prepaid meter)

14.1 For any conversion from a credit meter to a prepaid meter, the customer must first obtain a clearance certificate from credit control signed by the Supervisor: Debtor Management.

14.2 No conversion shall be processed without a payment of the applicable

deposit by the customer.

15. GENERAL SERVICE STANDARDS

15.1 Customer Service Standards are important to ensure that:

15.2.1 All customers, whether they are residents or visitors will receive the same consistent high standard of customer care;

15.2.2 Customer Care and Customer Service are essential to the planning and delivery of all Municipal services;

15.2.3 All staff members will constantly be concertized on their responsibility to put Customers first in the performance of their duties; and

15.2.4 Council shall avoid wasteful expenditure by providing services "Right the First time".

15.2 The Service Standards designed for good Customer Care are as follows:

15.2.1 Walk in Customers

Customers shall be greeted in a polite and courteous manner, wherever possible, staff will endeavour to resolve the customer's enquiry at first contact and staff shall maintain confidentiality especially when dealing with sensitive enquiries in a busy reception area by making use of the interview rooms.

15.2.2 Telephone Enquiries

- Staff shall answer telephone calls within five (5) rings;
- Staff should, wherever possible, resolve the customer's enquiry at first contact;
- Voicemail messages shall be responded to as soon as it is practically possible, preferably within 24 hours or the next working day if the message was left after hours, over a weekend, or a public holiday;

15.2.3 Written Correspondence

- Incoming written correspondence, fax, e-mail or letter, will be acknowledged within a maximum of three (3) working days and responded to at the maximum of ten working days depending on information sought;

15.2.4 Customer Complaints

- Verbal customer complaints shall be responded to within two (2) working days;
- Written customer complaints shall be acknowledged within three (3) days and a detailed written response within ten (10) working days; and
- Service delivery complaints needing immediate attention such as a burst pipe etc.

to be channelled through the Call Centre.

15.2.5 Communication

- Communication with the community will be in the languages they understand;
- Communication shall be on planned community meetings or municipal events or awareness campaign purposes;
- All communication shall clearly state that it is from Msunduzi Municipality, dated with reference numbers; and
- Social Media Platforms shall be used responsibly and professionally.

15.2.6 Customer Safety and Health

- Municipality shall ensure safe and healthy environment to all customers visiting Municipal buildings;

15.2.7 Staff training and development

- Staff shall receive continuous training and development to enable them to satisfy customer expectations and keep their skills up-to-date.

15.2.8 Dress Code and Staff identification

- Staff shall at all times be appropriately dressed with Frontline Staff in municipal issued uniform; and
- All staff shall wear name tags that have municipal logo, staff name and surname and those working in the field shall have these embroidered on their overalls.

15.2.9 Buildings and signage

- Municipal buildings shall have clear signage internally and externally; and operating hours shall be visibly displayed at Municipal main entrances.

15.2.10 Staff Conduct

- Staff shall report for work on time and should never leave their work stations unattended;
- Staff shall be courteous and polite and expect to be treated in the same way by customers;
- Staff shall, while at the services desks, not answer cell phones or office landlines to avoid creating an impression that customers are not attended to; and
- No visitors (internal or external) shall be allowed at the service desks, Switchboard or Call Centre.
- To ensure that the Municipality displays a professional image to the public,

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- Officials shall from time to time without prior notice be referred to the Municipal clinic to be tested for excessive alcohol use while on duty.

15.2.11 Customer Conduct

- All customers are to adhere to directives from staff members or security personnel;
- All customers shall not use abusive language or physically attack staff members; and
- Council reserves the right to remove any abusive or aggressive customers from the premises.

15.2.12 Business hours

- All customers shall have access to the following information:
- Operating hours; offices and addresses;
- After hours contact details; and Emergency numbers.

Customers may pay their accounts during office hours at the following Municipal Offices,

Office	Telephone number	Operating hours
Ashdown	033 3922741/ 2742/2740	07h30 to 16h00
Bombay Road	033 392 3300	08h00 to 16h00
333 Church street	033 392 3000/2740/2741/2 7 42	08h00 to 16h00
Edendale (Poyinandi)	033 392 3120	07h30 to 16h00

16. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

16.1 To monitor and evaluate adherence to the Service Standards, the Municipality shall:

16.1.1 Create mystery shopper programmes in which members of the public do business in different Municipal Departments to evaluate and score services objectively;

16.1.2 Organise annual focus group sessions to determine possible gaps that may exist between customer perceptions of municipal service delivery and what the municipality thinks it is achieving;

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16.1.3 Actively publicise and advertise a Customer Care number in municipal buildings, Help Line and email address where customers can report good or poor service, or provide feedback and suggestions;

16.1.4 Place feedback or suggestion boxes in strategic places to encourage Customer Care related feedback that will assist in addressing any shortcomings in the standard of service;

16.1.5 Collect information from internal staff, service providers and the community to obtain inputs for improving services;

16.1.6 Sign the Pledge by the Customer Care Staff in which they commit themselves to upholding Customer Service Standards;

16.1.7 Request customers to complete a Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire and post transaction telephone follow-up of a sample of returns to continuously evaluate customer perceptions of our service;

16.1.8 Give feed-back to citizens and other clients regarding the actions which have been taken to address the issues which have been raised;

16.1.9 Reflect Compliance with or Adherence to the Customer Care Service Standards as a Key Performance Indicator on all Performance Plan;

16.1.10 Recognise Service Excellence in customer care through recognising high performing staff members; and

16.1.11 Be sensitive to the feedback received from customers and use this to improve the levels of service rendered.

16.1.12 These monitoring methods will assist the municipality to develop programmes to address any shortcomings in the standard of our service.

17. CUSTOMER CARE COMMITMENT

17.1 The Municipality is committed to delivering quality services to its customers. Customers are encouraged to:

17.1.1 Submit their suggestions on what needs to be done to improve our services;

17.1.2 Bring to the attention of the Customer Service Desk personnel should a customer for any reason feel that a promise has not been kept;

17.1.3 Report any instance of poor customer service experienced at any Customer Service Desk or in any interaction with a Municipal official;

17.1.4 Report, comment, complain, compliment regarding municipal services at any Customer Service Desk/Municipal premises;

17.1.5 Report exceptionally good service so that the Municipality would recognise employees who go beyond the call of duty.

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18. RECORD KEEPING

The Electricity department as the custodians of the electricity meters shall be responsible for filing the New Service connection forms, same applies to the Water department as the custodians of water meters.

19. COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

19.1 Violation of or non-compliance with this policy will give a just cause of disciplinary steps to be taken.

19.2 It is the responsibility of the Accounting Officer to enforce compliance with this policy.

20. EFFECTIVE DATE

The policy shall come to effect upon approval by Council.

21. POLICY ADOPTION

This policy has been considered and approved by the council of Msunduzi Municipality as follows:

Resolution No: _____

Approval Date ____ 31 May 2021 ____