

ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY'S LANGUAGE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides for eleven official languages and recognizes the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of the people of South Africa (Sec 6).
- 1.2 It provides further that everyone has a right to use their language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice (Sec 30).
- 1.3 Municipalities are enjoined by the Constitution and the Municipal Systems Act to take into account the language usage and preferences of their residents when communicating, including the special needs of people who cannot read or write.
- 1.4 The National Language Policy Framework provides that upon determination of the language use and preference of communities, local government, in broad consultation with their communities, develop, publicise and implement a multilingual policy.
- 1.5 According to the results of the last census the languages spoken in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, in order of predominance, are isiZulu (80,9%), English (13,6%), isiXhosa (2,3%) and Afrikaans (1,5%). Statistics for the eThekwini region would not present a major deviation from those of the province.
- 1.6 It is in this spirit that the eThekwini Municipality adopts this Language Policy.

2 AIMS

The aims of this policy include the following:

- 2.1 To promote the equitable use of the two main official languages spoken in eThekwini, namely, isiZulu and English.
- 2.2 To facilitate access to government services, knowledge and information
- 2.3 To ensure redress of the imbalances of the past in the use of languages.
- 2.4 To encourage and support citizens to learn official languages other than their own which will assist in achieving and sustaining national unity and cultural diversity
- 2.5 To ensure equitable use of working languages by promoting good language management.

2.6 To implement and give effect to the provisions of Section 6 of the Constitution as well as the Batho Pele Principles and related service charters.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy include the following:

3.1 To determine the working languages for eThekweni Municipality, that is languages used in official communication.

3.2 To give due preference to the working languages for the Municipality.

3.3 To remove all language barriers thereby promoting equal access to municipal programmes and services.

3.4 To ensure that no person is denied or prevented from using their language of choice regardless of whether or not it is one of the working languages.

3.5 To give IsiZulu and English equal status and treatment.

4. SCOPE

The provisions of this policy shall apply to all organs of the Municipality including entities.

5. PROVISIONS FOR THE USE OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

5.1 MEETINGS

5.1.1 Any of the two working languages of the Municipality may be used in any debates and other proceedings of the Council and its Committees.

5.1.2 During the sittings of the Council and its Committees there should be provision for interpreting services into either of the working languages. In the event of any member wishing to have the proceedings interpreted into a language other than the working languages, such member must give adequate notice of the need for interpretation to the chairperson of Council or relevant Committee.

5.1.3 Sign language must be readily available if and when required.

- 5.1.4 Meetings or hearings with the public and or any public participation event must be conducted in either of the two working languages depending on the language preference of that audience. Should there be members of the audience who do not understand the preferred language, interpretation must be provided.

5.2 POLICIES AND BY-LAWS

Policies, by-laws and resolutions of the Council and its Committees must be written in both working languages of the Municipality.

5.3 NOTICES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

All official notices and advertisements issued for general public information must be published in English and IsiZulu.

5.4 CORRESPONDENCE

- 5.4.1 IsiZulu or English may be used for purposes of internal written communication. If the addressee does not understand the language used, she/he may request that communication with her/him takes place in a language that she/he understands.
- 5.4.2 Circulars must be issued in both working languages.
- 5.4.3 Internal oral communication can be in English or IsiZulu depending on the individuals that are conversing.
- 5.4.4 External communication must be in either of the working languages, taking into account the language preference of the recipient. Response to external communication must match the language of the original communication.
- 5.4.5 Outgoing correspondence must carry an indication that should the recipient require the correspondence in a working language other than the one in which it is written, such will be provided on request.
- 5.4.6 Citizens have a right to communicate in the language of their choice.

5.5 IDENTIFICATION SIGNS

Identification signs of and directions to municipal offices or facilities must be in both working languages.

5.6. CUSTOMER CARE

All customers must be served in their preferred language, with the assistance of interpreters, where necessary.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 STRATEGIES

- 6.1.1 The Municipality must ensure that both councillors and staff are sensitized to the value of multilingualism and encouraged to accommodate the language use and preference of residents/clients, other councillors and officials.
- 6.1.2 Translating and or interpreting services to the Municipality must be provided by skilled language professionals employed by the Municipality's Language Services division.
- 6.1.3 The Municipality must actively encourage and support the development of the language skills of both staff members and councillors.
- 6.1.4 Staff members and Councilors should be encouraged to learn and understand languages other than their own thus enhancing the value of multilingualism, promoting respect for cultural diversity and improving service delivery.
- 6.1.5 When recruiting new staff the Municipality's Units must take cognizance of this language policy.

6.2 TIMEFRAMES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.2.1 Unless otherwise stated in this policy or by a Council resolution, provisions of this policy will come into effect upon adoption by Council.
- 6.2.2 The City Manager must, within six months after the adoption of this policy by Council, establish timeframes for the implementation of the provisions of this policy.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The various Units of the eThekweni Municipality must make budgetary provision for the implementation of the language policy, e.g. development of

language skills of staff & councillors, investing in translation & interpreting infrastructure, etc.