



THEMBELIHLE

LOCAL MUNICIPALITY
PLAASLIKE MUNISIPALITEIT
U-MASIPALA WASEKUHLENI

FINAL INTERGRATED CUSTOMER CARE POLICY

2026 / 2027

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1. PREAMBLE

Whereas Section 95 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act, Act No 32 of 2000 requires a Municipality to exercise Customer Care and Management in relation to levying of rates and other taxes.

And Whereas Section 156(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1999 conferred powers of the Municipality to administer. Now therefore the Municipal Council of Thembelihle local municipality adopts the Customer Care Policy as set out in this document.

2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE.

In establishing itself as a progressive and service oriented municipality, Thembelihle local municipality, the City of Stars, is committed to focusing on its customers' needs as well as creating a positive and reciprocal relationship between the community or customers of the Municipality and the Municipality itself.

In order to achieve this objective, this Customer Care Policy has been adopted to develop structures to ensure that in our dealing with customers these values are demonstrated and in line with Batho Pele Principles

3. PRINCIPLES

- a. Thembelihle local municipality aims to set a consistent and excellent service standard in its dealings with customers.
- b. The Municipality is committed to ensuring human rights principles set out in the National Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, as well as the Batho Pele Principles, aimed at transformation of public service delivery, and "getting it right the first time", forms the basis on which Thembelihle local municipality's service delivery rests.
- c. By laying this basis and building a service delivery model thereon, the Municipality wants to display the commitment to the principle of "Customer First" and ensuring that service excellence forms an integral part of the planning and delivery of all Municipal services to our community.

4. MUNICIPAL VALUES.

- a) As a service delivery orientated organization, and in order to satisfy the goal of achieving Customer Service excellence, a common set of values, that guides the interaction between municipal Officials, and the customers shall form the basis of the relationship between the Municipality and its Customers.

b) Commitment to the following values will guide our Officials interaction with Customers and form the cornerstone of our customer focused approach:

- i) Mutual Respect, which includes mutual trust and understanding.
- ii) Good Customer Care.
- iii) Efficient and Excellent Service.
- iv) Integrity and Professionalism.
- v) Equity and Fairness.
- vi) Compassion and Dignity.

5. "PEOPLE FIRST" – THE *BATHO PELE* PRINCIPLE

- vii) National Government's approach to all interaction between government institutions and the public is based on the eight "Batho Pele Principles", which forms the foundation of service delivery to the public. Therefore, Customers of the Municipality:-
- viii) Should be given a choice about the services offered to them and also be consulted about the level and the quality of the public service they receive.
- ix) Has to be informed regarding the level and quality of public services (service standards) they will receive, in order to be aware of what service to expect.
- x) Should have equitable access to the services they are entitled to.
- xi) Has to be treated with courtesy and with consideration.
- xii) Should be given full and accurate information regarding the public services they are entitled to receive
- xiii) Has, in an open and transparent way, to be informed on how services are calculated and levied.
- xiv) Where the promised standard of service is not delivered, in redress, should be offered an apology, an explanation and a speedy and effective remedy, and when complaints are lodged, Customers should receive a sympathetic, positive response thereto.

- xv) Has to receive Municipal services (as a public service) provided economically and efficiently so as to give the best possible value for money.

6. THE CUSTOMER.

Habitually the people who dealt with the Municipality were primarily referred to as ratepayers or consumers. This created an unequal balance as these people were seen either as taxpayers or as people who consumed essential services provided by the Municipality.

The aim is at changing this mind set and constantly reminding ourselves that we are dealing with Customers,

- a. Thus, Customers are all the people that a Municipality deals with in the execution of daily duties and work.
- b. Customers are the people who live in, work in or visit the city and this includes people who do business with the Municipality.
- c. In this sense, the Municipality has internal as well as external Customers and the same standards shall apply to internal (colleagues and service providers) as to external Customers.

7. CUSTOMER CARE.

WHAT CUSTOMER CARE IS AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT:

Thembelihle local municipality is committed in ensuring that its customers get the assistance required when approaching the Municipality.

It is the Municipality's aim to, whenever contacted by a customer, make it convenient for the Customer to do so as well as treat such a customer courteously, promptly and fairly.

This in essence means that the Customer will receive a prompt and clear response to queries made within a stated period of time as defined in the Customer Care Standards and Management Controls as well as in the Customer Service Charters for the various service delivery counters.

Customer Care embodies the principle of taking care of Municipal Customers in a positive manner, as part of the set of behaviors to be undertaken in interaction with our customers.

At the same time and in addition to Officials education on Customer Care, Customers have to be informed what standards of Customer Care they can expect when they engage with officials/Officials of Thembelihle local municipality.

The "Customer First" principle will also be adhered to by the Municipality in all policies and procedures to be considered.

Therefore, Customer Care is:-

- a. Treating all Customers with courtesy, dignity and respect;
- b. As far as possible customers may be served in their language of choice, always bearing in mind that English is the official communicating language of Council as per resolution;
- c. Providing a good quality service in a friendly, efficient and helpful manner;
- d. Giving people the information they need and providing an explanation where the service is not available or up to the expected standard;
- e. Keeping the Customers informed of progress in addressing their complaints, requests and enquiries.
- d. Subsequently Customer Care standards are important to ensure: -
 - i. That all Customers, whether they are residents or visitors to Thembelihle local municipality, will receive the same consistent high standards of customer care;
 - ii. That Customer Care and service to Customers are essential to the planning and delivery of all Council Services;
 - iii. That Thembelihle local municipality officials will constantly be reminded of their responsibility in putting the Customer First and what this means in practical terms;
 - iv. That Thembelihle local municipality will eliminate wastage by providing all services "Right the First Time".

8. **CUSTOMER CARE CYCLE.**

Terms of Credit Control and Debt Collection Policy

- e. The Municipality provides services to the consumers.
- f. Afford opportunities for customer queries to be addressed.
- g. Implement the follow up process of query resolution.
- h. Ensure community interaction outside the office.
- i. Implement processes to produce accurate and credible accounts.
- j. Bill for the service rendered.
- k. Issue accounts to consumers.

- l. Remind customers by issuing notices to settle accounts.
- m. Issue final notices to non-paying consumers, a further opportunity to the consumer to either raise queries or to make arrangements for account payment.
- n. Consult with non-paying consumers, as part of the final demand process and actual credit control action and enforcement of credit policy.
- o. Final step is to restrict or disconnect actual services to the consumer, with clear municipal input via the customer care and debt collecting policies.

9. CUSTOMER INTERACTION.

9.1 Face to Face Contact;

- a) Customers will be treated in a courteous and polite manner.
- b) Officials should always give their full attention to the customer.
- c) Wherever possible, Officials will aim to resolve the customer's enquiry at first contact
- d) All customers will be catered for, and appropriate arrangements are in place.

e) Officials at first point of contact will give customers the option of seeing specialist members of Officials.

9.2 Waiting Times

9.3 Telephone Calls;

- a) Officials will answer telephone calls promptly
- b) Officials should aim, wherever possible, to resolve the customer's enquiry at first contact.
- c) If a call is put on hold the customer must be told the reasons and kept updated if the waiting time is longer than expected.

9.4 Written Correspondence.

- a) Incoming written correspondence will be acknowledged within 7 days and responded to in 14 working days
- b) Receipt of an email will be acknowledged in 3 working day
- c) All issues raised by the customer will be acknowledged and responded to within the correspondence.

9.5 Complaints Procedure

- a) Officials will aim to resolve all concerns raised by the customer immediately and informally
- b) Officials will inform the customer that if the informal resolution is not to their satisfaction, they may make a formal complaint and explain how to do this
- c) Heads of Departments will analyze any complaints about the service in their respective units and take remedial action

10. MEASURING SUCCESS IN CUSTOMER CARE.

10.3 Thembelihle local municipality Customer Care Policy is extended with specific Customer Service Charters for each service delivery counter, in which Charter the Customer Care Standards for that specific service point is contained.

10.4 Customer Care Officials at the counters shall commit to upholding the Customer Care Standards set for their various service counters.

10.5 Satisfactory Customer Care performance by Municipal officials/Officials will be monitored continuously and Performance will be reviewed quarterly.

10.6 Methods for receiving Customer feedback will be developed and communicated to the customers.

10.7 Communication means will be developed and communicated to the customers within the constraints of the municipal resources.

10.8 Comments and complaints from Customers are an important part of the process and will assist in building a "Customer First" environment

10.9 Monitoring methods will further help in developing programmes to address any shortcomings in the standard of the Municipality's service.

11. STANDARDS AND CONTROLS IN CUSTOMER CARE

11.1 Customer Care Standards

Thembelihle local municipality is committed to the continuous improvement of the standards of service it renders to its customers. For this reason, the Municipality is endeavoring to provide services and manage complaints in a manner which is timeous, efficient and effective.

In reaching this goal in service delivery the following principles have been set as Customer Care Standards: -

- a. A friendly and courteous service that puts the Customer first; that is Customer focused and measurable;
- b. Clear guidelines along which officials/Officials is to behave in dealing with Customers;
- c. Clear, achievable performance targets;
- d. Trained officials who have a full understanding of the standards of performance that are expected will go through additional training and capacitated to achieve these performance standards.

11.2 Commitment to equal opportunities which will provide: -

- i) Support, interpretation and translation services;
- ii) Clear signage to direct Customers to where they need to go;
- iii) Accessible, welcoming buildings and service counters;
- iv) Disabled access wherever practicable;
- v) Private areas, when necessary, where Customers can discuss private and sensitive matters;
- vi) Officials/Officials trained in awareness and understanding.

12. CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS.

Customers of Thembelihle local municipality can expect the following treatment from officials/Officials: -

- a. Courtesy, respect and consideration towards a customer at all times;
- b. Officials/Officials will identify themselves by name and communicate by listening and responding appropriately
- c. Communicate efficiently, with integrity, fairly and professionally;
- d. To be provided with relevant, accurate and up-to-date information;
- e. Actively seeking comments on a regular basis in order to continue and develop a service of high standard;
- f. In instances where problems arise: -
 - i. Officials will deal with such a problem promptly;

- ii. Advise on a probable delay in provision of a solution to the problem as well as any relevant reasons;
- iii. Update on progress with long-term problems;
- v. Advise on how and who to contact in the event of any dissatisfaction.

13. CUSTOMER CARE: MANAGEMENT.

At the core of the service delivery principle of placing the Customer first, lies the need to re-evaluate processes as well as ensure achievement of set standards.

For the purpose of meeting that goal, controls to measure the Municipality's overall performance has been set in place, including: -

- a. Compliance with or adherence to the Customer Care Service Standards to be reflected as a Key Performance Indicator on each responsible official's Performance Plan;
- b. Continuous training programs for officials to ensure effective service delivery and Customer satisfaction;
- c. Continuous monitoring and review of processes and procedures in ensuring the Customer is put first;
- d. Consideration for introduction of a computerised call-logging and tracking system, ensuring sensitivity and efficiency in the enquiries, complaints and feedback received from Customers.

14. VARIOUS SERVICE DELIVERY COUNTERS.

14.1 Accommodation of Disabled and Senior Citizens

General enquires on all Municipal Services.

14.2 Municipal Services General – excluding & Licenses, Community Safety & Disaster Management.

- a. Any query or complaint regarding Corporate and Technical Services to be recorded and submitted to the relevant Service Business Units.
- b. Means of communication between SBU's to be done via
 - Telephones; and
 - E-mails
- c. Centralized database to be maintained for accurate reporting and tracking purpose of all complaints.

- d. All Financial Services complaints must be captured.
- e. Feedback to customers to be done via telephone and or e-mails and in person for walk in customers.
- f. Turn-around time regarding feedback or completion of the complaint or query, must not exceed 21 (twenty-one) working days, alternatively according to timeframes as set in Policies and By-Laws of The Thembelihle local municipality
- g. All queries and complaints that are not being dealt within the prescribed timeframe must be escalated to the next levels: Direct Supervisor, Assistant Manager, Manager, Director and ultimately the Municipal Manager.

14.3 Indigents and request for extension on payments:

Refer to indigent policy

- a. All Indigents related queries
- b. Apply for extension of payments on service accounts on the prescribed via the prescribed documents

14.4 Account Statements and Clearances:

- a. Issuing of duplicates accounts, histories and various reports.
- b. Receive applications for clearance requests on transfer of properties
- c. Attorney correspondence relating to clearances only (Submit and collect)

14.5 Budget and Treasury – General enquiries:

- a. All account and related queries.
- b. Request special meter readings on the prescribed document, accompanied by payments as stipulated in the Tariff policy.
- c. Request a Meter Test on the prescribed document, accompanied by payments as stipulated in the Tariff policy.
- d. Changing of addresses.
- e. Requesting ACB payment methods.
- f. Cancellation of ACB payment methods.
- g. Valuation certificates/roll at the tariff as per Councils Tariff policy.
- h. Request information subject to stipulation of Access to the Information as stipulated in The Promotion of Access to Information Act, Act 2 of 2000.
- i. Profile updates.
- j. Prepaid water and Electricity Personnel
- k. Technical Services Officials **will do Installation, maintenance, monitoring and support of Smart Meter systems.**
- l.
- m. **Request Smart Meter inspections, testing, or data verification.**

14.6 Connection and Disconnection of supply services:

- a. Only rightful owners are allowed to apply for services on the prescribed documents. No tenant will be allowed to apply for any services unless prepaid.
- b. Special consent to open accounts should be allowed to Lessees who have contracts with the Municipality; (Sundry accounts), including private owned properties where a portion of the property is being leased to cellular phone towers.
- c. Notification of disconnections by owners of properties in respect of services on the prescribed documents.

*Arrange final readings, including arrangements of access to premises by authorized representatives of the Municipality for purposes of final readings. Refer section 101 of the Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000.

14.7 Cashiers.

Refer to cash management policy

- a. Cashiers' general.
- b. Disabled, Senior Citizens
- c. Traffic Fines
- d. One can also pay at the Shops- Easypays (Retail stores); and Post Office.

15. COMMUNICATION TO PUBLIC REGARDING METER READING AND METER READING SCHEDULES

- a. Section 101 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act to restrict makes it an offense deny accessibility of meters to authorized representatives of the Municipality.
- b. Where a reading could not be obtained, The Municipality may estimate the consumption based on previous actual readings, or if council fails to obtain a previous actual reading fixed consumption will be billed on the accounts.
- c. Members of the public must further be informed that failure to receive an account does not relieve a consumer of the obligation to pay an amount due and payable. Accounts can be obtained during normal working hours, per e-mail, telephone request of by visiting the Head Office or any satellite office.
- d. Inform Hopetown Citizens of the Municipality's intention to do away with Conventional Meters- we rolling over to Prepaid Services
- e. Fines for Bridging Municipal Services- taken care of by the Technical Team weekly (Surprise Visits conducted)
- f. **The Municipality may introduce and utilise Smart Metering systems to enhance billing accuracy, reduce estimated readings, improve service efficiency and enable remote meter reading and monitoring. Customers shall allow installation, maintenance and**

access to Smart Meters as required.

- g. Smart Meter - means an advanced metering device capable of recording, storing and transmitting water or electricity consumption data in real time or near real time, and enabling remote monitoring, control, and management by the Municipality.

16. ORGANISATIONAL CONDUCT: CODE OF CONDUCT OF ALL MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

- a. All Municipal Officials shall treat all customers with dignity and respect at all times. Employees shall execute their duties in an honest and transparent manner whilst protecting the confidentiality of information in accordance with the Promotion of Access to Information Act No. 2 of 2000.
- b. Where information held by the municipality is requested by Customers, such information shall only be made available in accordance with the Municipality's official Promotion of Access to Information Manual and provided that the necessary application forms have been filled in by a customer and the required fee has been paid.
- c. All Councillors and officials shall conduct themselves according to the "Code of Conduct" for Councillors and Municipal Officials members as contained in Schedule 1 & 2 of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000.

17. SHORT TITLE

This policy shall be called the Integrated Customer Care Management Policy of the Thembelihle local municipality

18. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy shall be implemented on 1st July 2026 and shall be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is in line with the municipality's strategic objectives and with legislation.