



BERGRIVIER MUNICIPALITY

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BERGRIVIER MUNISIPALITEIT

NOTULE VAN DIE UITVOERENDE BURGEMEESTERSKOMITEE SE VIRTUELE VERGADERING GEHOU OP DONDERDAG 11 JUNIE 2020 OM 10:00 VANAF PIKETBERG.

TEENWOORDIG:

LEDE VAN DIE UITVOERENDE BURGEMEESTERSKOMITEE

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Rdl. J Daniels	[DA]	Voorsitter van Korporatiewe Dienste Komitee (Artikel 79)

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UITVOERENDE BURGEMEESTERSKOMITEEVERGADERING: BESLUIT GENEEM OP DONDERDAG 11 JUNIE 2020

BKN019/06/2020

AMENDMENT OF THE COMMUNICATION POLICY AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY 2/B

The Chairperson, Alderman Van Rooy gave a brief introduction to the item under discussion.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the Executive Mayoral Committee adopts the Amended Communication Policy and Amended Social Media Policy as tabled in terms of the legal framework;
2. That the Amended Communication Policy and Amended Social Media Policy be implemented with immediate effect;
3. That the Amended Communication Policy and Amended Social Media Policy be placed on the municipal website (www.bergmun.org.za) and that it be sent to all employees with access to computers via e-mail; and
4. That a notification be placed on the Bergrivier Municipality Facebook Page with a link to the Amended Communication Policy and Amended Social

**HEAD:
COMMUNICATION**

Media Policy and that the documents be sent to the ICA and via WhatsApp to each member of the Bergrivier Youth Forum.

G SEJWAS 'N WARE U/TTREKSEL VAN DIE NOTULE

MUNISIPALE BESTUURDER
24 JUNIE 2020

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1. DEFINITIONS:

In this document:

Communication: Refers to any written communication regarding Bergrivier Municipality with the purpose of sharing information with the public, the press, the Council, employees, interested and affected parties and all other stakeholders, through the various communication methods as stipulated by this document.

Constitution: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

IDP: Integrated Development Plan as approved by Bergrivier Municipality from time to time.

SOP: Standard Operating Procedure

MM: Municipal Manager

HOC: Head of Communications

ICT: Information Communication Technology

Youth: According to the National Youth Commission Act (Act 1996), any person aged between 14 and 35 falls into the youth category.

ICA: Initiative for Community Advancement

MFMA: Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003)

Social Media: Digital platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp used for creating and sharing content.

Disinformation: False information shared with the intent to deceive.

APPS: An application, especially as downloaded by a user to a mobile device

In this policy, unless the context indicates otherwise, the terms listed below will be understood to have the following meaning:	
Advertising	Means any message conveyed by the municipality that is broadcasted by way of mediums such as newspapers, television, radio, websites and/or the internet.
Crisis	Means an abnormal situation where prompt action, beyond normal procedures, is required in order to limit damage to persons, property or the environment.
External Communication	Means communication that originates from within Bergrivier Municipality where such communication/messages are intended for external public.

Internal Communication	Means communication that originates within Bergrivier Municipality's departments where such communication/messages are solely intended for officials within said department or, as the case may be, for officials functioning within Bergrivier Municipality as a whole.
Spokesperson	Means a delegated person who speaks on behalf of Bergrivier Municipality.

2. INTRODUCTION:

Bergrivier Municipality is a well-managed, value-driven local government with very good relationships with all its stakeholders. The municipality is known for good innovative partnerships. This requires good communication with all.

Good communication forms the building blocks of any relationship. The relationship between a municipality and its stakeholders are no different than that of a relationship between two friends or partners. It lays the foundation from which a strong partnership can be built on and good communication will lead to the creation of trust, certainty and a sense of pride for all who live, work, learn and play in Bergrivier Municipality.

Bergrivier Municipality is therefore committed to regular two-way communication, by building lasting relationships with its internal and external stakeholders and to form partnerships with the public and private sector.

The Communication Policy seeks to ensure that Bergrivier Municipality acknowledges the importance of communication as a strategic leadership function and an integral part of its daily functioning. The municipality also acknowledges that it has a responsibility to inform its internal and external stakeholders of challenges identified, progress made and results achieved in addressing its mandate and vision. This policy will ensure that communication takes place in a coordinated and uniform manner and with the highest impact.

This policy further ensures that all the towns within the jurisdiction of the municipality is communicated to on an equitable basis.

The central message throughout all its communication efforts must reflect the vision and values of Bergrivier Municipality, namely: **“Bergrivier: A prosperous community where all want to live, work, learn and play in a dignified manner”**. And the nine (9) core values are:

- 1. We are all part of Bergrivier Municipality**
- 2. We strive to render good service to ensure that all people can live in a dignified manner.**
- 3. We are unashamedly pro-poor.**
- 4. We believe in good relationships.**
- 5. We care about our work and our colleagues.**
- 6. We serve with pride.**
- 7. We are disciplined.**
- 8. We believe in social and economic development of the area.**
- 9. We believe in close innovative partnerships.**

This policy provides a platform which enables joint responsibility, which is dependent on Bergrivier Municipality, its citizens and businesses, working together in seamless partnerships as envisaged by our philosophy of the three circles: A municipality consists of three equal partners who must work together in sustainable partnerships.



The policy aims to positively build and protect the image of Bergrivier Municipality. It aims to assist the municipality in communicating the strategic direction and development of the municipality in terms of its Integrated Development Plan.

3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK:

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, section 152 (1)(e), in setting out the objectives of local government and states that municipalities must “encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government”. Section 160 (7) of the Constitution says that “a municipal council must conduct its business in an open manner, and may close its sittings, or its committees, only when it is reasonable to do so”.

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), section 4, encourages the involvement of communities in the affairs of their municipalities. The following sections of the Municipal Systems Act also informs this Communication Policy:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Section 5 | - Rights and duties of members of the local community |
| Section 6 | - Duties of municipal administrations |
| Section 18 | - Communication and information concerning community participation |
| Section 21 | - Communication to local community |
| Section 21B | - Official website |
| Section 51 | - Organisation and administration |
| Section 80 | - Provision of services through service delivery agreements with external mechanisms |

Section 75 of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003) requires that municipalities place key documents and information on their websites, including their Integrated Development Plan (IDP), annual budget, adjustment budgets, budget-related documents and policies, and other documents required by legislation.

Regulation 30 of the Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003) and the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations published in Government Gazette 32141, General Notice, on 17 April 2009, also informs this Communication Policy.

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998);
Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000);
Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act 2 of 2000);
Media Development and Diversity Agency Act, 2002 (Act 14 of 2002);
Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act 4 of 2013);
Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, 2005 (Act 13 of 2005).

4. COMMUNICATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

4.1 Executive Mayor

The Executive Mayor is the main strategic spokesperson for the municipality. He or she is responsible for communicating all aspects of Council policies and is also the main communicator for all public participation unless it is delegated otherwise. The Executive Mayor must communicate the annual priorities, objectives and requirements contained in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

All media enquiries must be treated as top priority and attended to within three (3) working days. Both media enquiries and responses must be in writing, except for radio and television interviews.

4.2 Municipal Manager (MM)

The Municipal Manager (MM) is the key spokesperson for all strategic and operational issues. The MM ensures the integration of the communication function with the municipality's decision-making processes. The MM is also responsible for communicating matters of an administrative nature. He or she must also ensure that the municipality's priorities are reflected in its communication objectives, and is in line with the Integrated Development Plan.

All media enquiries must be treated as top priority and attended to within three (3) working days. Both media enquiries and responses must be in writing, except for radio and television interviews.

4.3 Directors:

The Directors' responsibilities are as follows:

- Ensure compliance with the municipality's Communication Policy.
- Attend to media enquiries through the Head of Communication.
- Ensure, in consultation with the Head of Communication, that their programmes have communication action plans in place as part of their strategies.

To ensure that the Head of Communication is kept abreast with activities within their department, which needs to be communicated either internally or externally.

To contribute towards the compilation of the Quarterly External Newsletter by providing the Head of Communication with relevant information.

4.4 Head of Communication (HOC):

The Head of Communications (HOC) must coordinate all generic communication activities, including the procurement of communication products and services. The HOC must also ensure that the Communication Policy is communicated to staff and is adhered to.

The HOC is responsible for building media relations through regular visitations , arranging of media conferences, issuing of media statements and handling media enquiries. The HOC will act on the instruction of the Municipal Manager. All queries from the media, which is of a political nature, will be directed to the Municipal Manager or Executive Mayor.

The Communication Section must coordinate all communication activities in the municipality. It must provide strategic advice and counsel on communication policy development. And it must development and implement communication plans as well as produce publications for disseminating information.

This section is also responsible for identifying communication issues, developing communication strategies, implementing and managing communication actions (such as campaigns, events, advertising, the design and printing of communication materials, audiovisual communication, marketing and communication research).

4.5 Client Services:

The Client Services Unit communicates and relays service-delivery orientated messages to the public as stipulated by its Client Services Charter. This Unit focusses on service-delivery related challenges which occur within the Bergrivier Municipal Area and processes complaints received by the public such as: Damaged side-walks, broken street lights, pipe bursts, faulty meters, stray animals, vandalism, flooding and potholes.

The process works as follows:

- The client approaches (walk-ins, via e-mail or telephonically) the municipality with a complaint, which needs to be resolved;
- The client services officer collects all the relevant details from the client and a job card is created (on an internal system);
- The job card is forwarded to the relevant department for processing;
- The client will receive a reference number to keep track of his/her logged complaint;
- Once the complaint is resolved, the client service officer notifies the client.

The Unit is focused on enhancing the municipality's service delivery efforts and client experience. This service functions with dedicated communication channels by means of e-mail, telephone and the website. Survey's should be conducted at specified intervals to determine the level of customer service and whether it (Client Services) provides to the needs of our customers.

5. PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS:

The following procedures and regulations govern the implementation of Bergrivier Municipality's Communication Policy:

5.1 Media Relations

The Communication Section is the Municipality's first line of contact with the media and must coordinate all media relations. The following procedures apply to media liaison:

The Communication Section must be consulted before the municipality responds to media enquiries. Where this is impossible, the response must be signed off by the Municipal Manager and copied to the Communication Section.

All media enquiries must be referred to the Communication Section, which then must engage with the relevant line functionaries for an adequate response.

The Communication Section ideally coordinates interactions with the media, such as media conferences, briefings, letters to the media and advertising, at all times.

The Communication Section is responsible for media evaluation and monitoring. Items of importance must be circulated to those who are affected, either for information purposes or for a draft response.

Media enquiries must be dealt with within three (3) working days.

Enquiries received after hours will be dealt with only during office hours, unless there is obvious urgency or instructions to deal with them after hours.

Both media enquiries and responses must be in writing, except for radio and television interviews.

Media enquiries must be treated as top priority.

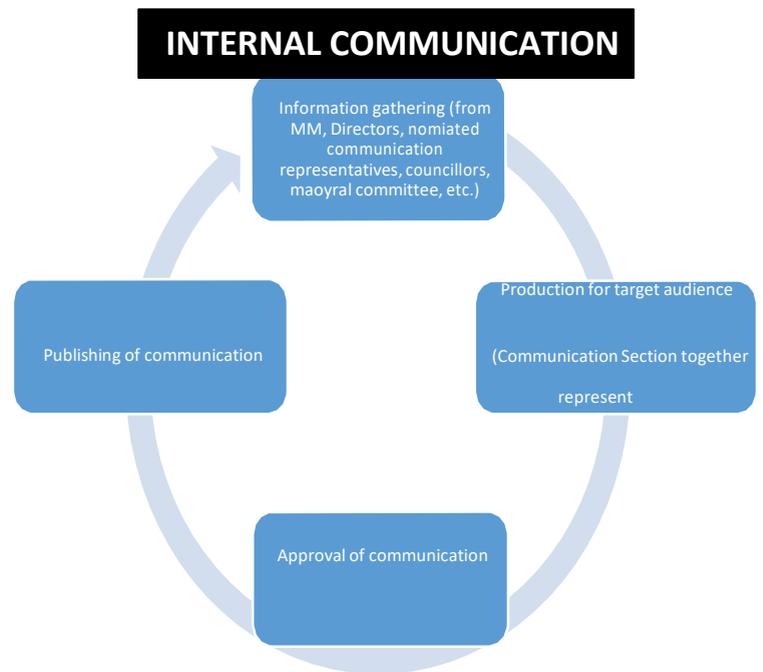
5.2 Internal Communication

The main purpose of internal communication is to facilitate and manage the flow of information within the municipality, in order to create an informed workforce. Internal communication involves information about municipal programmes, relevant information regarding human resources and other useful information that staff may have an interest in.

The following communication tools and mediums can be used to communicate with staff members:

- Newsletters
- Posters
- Notice-Boards
- Intranet
- Workshops
- Staff Meetings

- Toilet Notice-Boards
- SMS'es
- Pay slips
- Weekly schedules

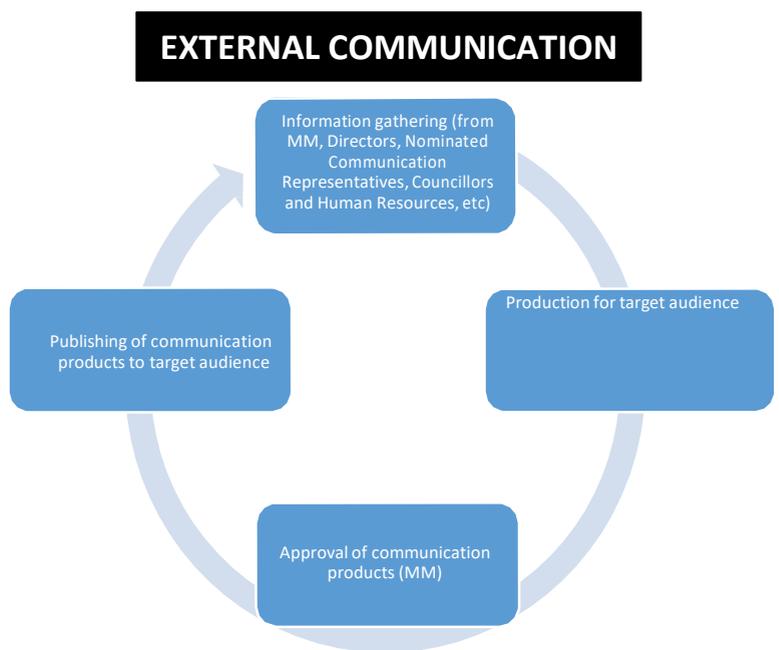


5.3 External Communication

The main purpose of external communication is to inform and engage stakeholders of the municipality's services and programmes. The External Newsletter (Bergrivier Bulletin) must be produced, published and distributed in the municipal area on a quarterly basis. Each department should contribute towards the compilation of the External Newsletter.

The following communication tools and mediums can be used to communicate with stakeholders:

- Newsletters
 - Pamphlets
 - Brochures
 - Corporate documents
 - Billboards
 - Radio
 - Television
 - Road Shows
 - Exhibitions
 - Conferences
 - Summits
 - Workshops
 - Internet
 - Newspapers
- and Strategic



All external communication campaigns must be approved by the Communication Section.

5.3.1 Code of Communications

Where municipal employees and/or councillors use any communication platforms and wish to provide personal comments on these platforms, they could contravene the Code of Conduct and bring the municipal service into disrepute or be misinterpreted as being an official representative of Bergrivier Municipality. All employees and/or councillors must at all times adhere to the Codes of Conduct as pertained in the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000).

5.4 Production of Communication Material

The Communication Section must be consulted on communication material that is produced on behalf of the municipality. Decisions to outsource such activity or part thereof must be approved by the Head of Communication. And if required, final approval to be granted by the Municipal Manager.

5.5 Branding and Corporate Image

The Communication Section must manage the municipality's corporate identity, as it directly influences its image. This includes responsibility for the following:

The look at feel of the municipality's office buildings.

The type of communication material used by the municipality e.g. folders, letterheads, publications, photos, videos, newsletters, brochures, business cards, banners.

The way in which communication and promotional material is used and produced e.g. the official font type and size (Calibri 12pt), the use of logos, corporate clothing and corporate identity.

5.6 Promotional Material

Promotional material using the municipality's corporate identity may be used for official purposes only. The production of such material must be authorised by the Communication Section (e.g. T-Shirts, Track Suits, Pens, Caps, Newsletters, Brochures). And if required, final approval to be granted by the Municipal Manager.

The use of the municipal logo for projects not initiated by the municipality, must be approved by the Communication Section.

5.7 Procurement of Communication Material

Communication material includes any type of publication, newsletter, magazine, brochure, audiovisual material and any other material intended to convey information to the public.

The Communication Section must ensure that communication products and services, including those of consultants, are acquired in a fair and equitable manner, and must therefore be consulted on the procurement processes for communication.

It is advisable to make use of the Communication Section's in-house service, depending on the type of project, time frames, available capacity and budgets.

5.8 Exhibitions

The Communication Section must manage the municipality's corporate identity. Therefore, this section must be consulted when other departments participate in roadshows, fairs or exhibitions on behalf of the municipality.

5.9 Website

The Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act 2 of 2000) states that each state institution or semi-government body must have a fully-functional website. The management (including updating of information) of Bergrivier Municipality's website resides within the ICT Department, which falls under the Corporate Services Directorate.

5.10 Advertising

The Administration Services Department is responsible for the placement of advertisements (e.g. tenders, vacancies, etc.) for Bergrivier Municipality, once approval from the relevant Manager and/or Head of Department is granted.

5.11 Social Media

Manage a social media platform (e.g. Facebook, Twitter or Instagram) as part of keeping the municipality up to date with technological innovation. Social media platforms are increasingly being used as vital tools in local government, to better connect with communities.

Utilising a social media platform to communicate municipal activities and progress on service delivery efforts, will contribute to building the vision of Bergrivier Municipality. Various social media platforms should be explored. It is an effective tool for direct and free communication.

Careful management thereof must be implemented with a dedicated employee, monitoring it as often as possible, as capacity within the Communication Section allows.

The management of any social media platform created by Bergrivier Municipality, will be guided by the Social Media Policy.

5.12 Mobile Communication

Bergrivier Municipality recognizes the increasing role of mobile technology in enabling efficient and accessible communication with the public. In response to this need, the Municipality has adopted the Collab Citizen App as an official mobile communication platform.

The Collab Citizen App enables residents, including the youth, to access municipal information, log service delivery complaints, track progress, and receive real-time notifications and updates directly on their mobile devices. This app supports two-way communication by allowing residents to both receive messages from the Municipality and provide feedback in the form of reporting issues conveniently.

Improving the functionality of this application is a one of the Municipality's communication priorities, to ensure it meets the evolving needs of stakeholders. Marketing efforts will be made to increase awareness and usage of the app, especially among youth and residents in remote areas. All departments must support the integration of the app into their communication and service delivery processes to promote greater transparency, responsiveness, and efficiency.

5.13 IDP Meetings and Ward Committee Meetings

The IDP consultative meetings and Ward Committee meetings takes place as per the Annual Schedule of Key Deadlines throughout the municipal area. This provides an opportunity for the community and the municipality to directly interact with one another, to discuss challenges and come up with solutions together. It's also an opportunity for the community to have an active input in projects and budget appropriation for each financial year.

In September of each year, the municipality goes on a roadshow across the Bergrivier Municipal Area seeking inputs from communities to incorporate into the IDP. This is done by means of roundtable discussions. This platform creates an opportunity for the community to give input on planned projects and provide feedback. Whilst in April of the same financial year, the municipality provides the community with feedback on the IDP and Budget (for the next three years) by conducting information sessions followed by a question and answer session. This platforms creates an opportunity for the community to raise concerns.

Communication takes place proactively and reactively directly to and from stakeholders in structured meetings, where all stakeholders are invited to attend. The entire IDP consultative process,

affords the municipality an opportunity to address concerns raised by the public. It also allows the municipality to provide the community with information on plans and council decisions.

Ward Committees also allow for elected community representatives to partake in a dialogue between council and the public. This communication channel is governed by rules and regulations determined by Council as well as section 74 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998).

6. YOUTH COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Bergvriër Municipality acknowledges the importance of involving young people (aged 14 to 35) in shaping the future of the region. The Municipality will therefore continue to strengthen its communication with youth – using relevant platforms, language, and methods that are accessible to young people. And encouraging their participation in local government.

In the past, youth voices were not always captured during formal IDP or public participation processes. In recent years, efforts have been made to create opportunities for young people to get involved – including youth representation in Ward Committees and youth-focused communication via social media. By using a social media-focused approach and providing information on platforms preferred by young people, the Municipality aims to make local government matters more accessible and encourage greater two-way dialogue between the Municipality and the youth.

6.1 Objectives of the Youth Communications Strategy

- Promote awareness of local government and encourage youth participation in municipal processes;
- Communicate important information on municipal services, development projects, jobs and bursary opportunities, and youth programmes;
- Use channels and platforms that are accessible and popular with young people;
- Encourage civic responsibility, leadership and positive social behaviour among youth; and
- Ensure that youth voices and perspectives are included in IDP planning and community development.

6.2 Core Communication Focus Areas

- Municipal News (e.g. Free Wi-Fi spots, Public Participation Processes)
- Role of Ward Committees
- Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Information
- Sporting events
- Entrepreneurial Training / Workshops
- Bursaries / Internships / Vacancies

6.3 Language Preference

Although the Bergrivier Municipal Area consists of a largely Afrikaans population, there are smaller populations that prefer English as their primary language of communication. Bergrivier Municipality believes in an inclusive living environment and thus, all official communication should, where time and budget considerations allow, be disseminated in both English and Afrikaans. Depending on where Public Meetings are held in the Bergrivier Municipality Area, language preference should always be taken into consideration to accommodate all people.

6.4 Communication Platforms

Bergrivier Municipality makes use of digital and traditional platforms to reach young people, ensuring that communication is at all times accessible, engaging and inclusive across all communities and age groups.

- Municipality's official Facebook Page and other social media platforms;
- Official WhatsApp Channel – sharing information, pictures, audio and videos;
- Disseminating posters and flyers in areas where internet access is limited;
- Short videos and reels on social media, using simple and relatable language; and
- Collab Citizen App – sharing information, pictures and links.

6.5 Youth Inputs / Commentary

Bergrivier Municipality values the inputs of all community members in shaping the future of the region, particularly through the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process, which sets the overall development framework for the area. It is essential that the voices of young people are included in this process, as they bring unique perspectives, energy, and innovation ideas that can help inform more inclusive and forward-looking municipal planning.

To ensure meaningful youth participation, the Municipality encourages all Ward Committees to fill their Youth Representative positions and to support these representatives in actively engaging with their peers at ward level. These youth representatives must be actively engaged within a particular youth sector in their area. These representatives act as important links between the Municipality and young people in their communities, helping to gather input on issues, priorities, and development opportunities.

Young people will also be encouraged to participate in IDP Town-Based Meetings and related platforms, where they can submit their views, proposals, and concerns for consideration by the Department: Strategic Services. These efforts aim to make municipal processes more accessible, representative and responsive to the needs of the youth.

6.6 Advertising for the youth

Compliance requires that Bergrivier Municipality advertises all public meetings that are to be held

in the various towns we serve. It is, however, important that we seriously consider the way in which we advertise to ensure its effectiveness.

Bergrivier Municipality should advertise in a way that attracts all people, especially the youth, to get involved in public meetings. Youth-friendly colours, simple and direct messages, coupled with images is a sure way to attract people's attention to a specific cause.

7. COMMUNICATION IN DISASTER / CRISIS SITUATIONS

7.1 Disasters

In the event of a disaster, the following communication and coordination process must be adhered to, in alignment with the Municipality's Disaster Management Plan:

- The manager whose area of responsibility is involved must immediately inform his or her Director and copy the Head: Communications
- A **Strategic Joint Operations Centre (JOC)**, consisting of the Municipal Manager, the Executive Mayor, and the Director: Community Services, is convened to assess the gravity of the crisis. The Strategic JOC determines whether an **Operational JOC** should be activated.
- The **Operational JOC**, when activated, consists of the Director: Community Services, Manager: Community Services, Head: Disaster Management and Fire Services, Head: Communications, Head: Traffic Services, Head: Law Enforcement, and any other relevant officials as required by the nature of the crisis.
- The **Strategic JOC** is responsible for providing political and strategic direction, while the **Operational JOC** manages the day-to-day operational response and coordinates communication with the public.
- The Executive Mayor and Municipal Manager must be informed immediately of all developments.
- Official communication to the media and public is managed through the JOC structures, in consultation with the Principal Spokespersons. The Executive Mayor and Municipal Manager act as official spokespersons, unless otherwise stipulated. No media statement or interview by any other official may be released without prior approval from the Municipal Manager and/or Executive Mayor.
- Staff members must be kept informed of the developing situation through regular internal communication.

7.2 Crises

In a crisis situation (other than a disaster), the Head: Communications will liaise in person or per telephone with the Municipal Manager and determine the best course of action to deal with the communication in terms of the current crisis.

8. MANAGEMENT OF DISINFORMATION AND UNACCEPTABLE ONLINE BEHAVIOUR

The Municipality recognises the growing impact of social media on public perception and service delivery. To protect the integrity of Council, its officials, and the community, the following principles shall apply:

- **Commitment to Truthful Information**
The Municipality is committed to providing accurate, timely, and transparent information to the public. Official platforms of the Municipality will be the primary source of verified communication.
- **Staff Guidance**
All staff and Councillors is to be provided with guidance on how to identify and handle disinformation. Staff members must immediately report suspected disinformation to the Communications Unit for further action.
- **Response to Disinformation**
Where false or misleading information is identified and reported to the Communications Unit, the Municipality will:
 - Identify whether it has a negative impact on the Municipality.
 - Could issue corrective communication on official platforms, clearly distinguishing facts from disinformation.
 - Could engage with affected stakeholders, where possible and necessary, to restore confidence and prevent further spread of falsehoods.
 - Where appropriate and possible, request retractions or removals from social media platform administrators and urging them to put more effective controls in place to manage the content more effectively.
- **Unacceptable behaviour by the public**
The Municipality will not tolerate abusive, false, defamatory, discriminatory, or threatening comments directed at Councillors or its officials on its social media platforms. **If such behaviour is identified and reported it will be:**
 - Documented.
 - Removed (or hidden) from the Municipality's official social media platforms.
 - Addressed through proactive public education on respectful engagement.
- **Promotion of responsible online engagement**
 - The Municipality encourages fact-checking and fostering constructive dialogue with residents through ongoing communication campaigns.
 - Suspected disinformation about Councillors and / or staff members may be reported to the Office of the Head: Communications.
- **Accountability of Councillors and Staff in Online Engagement**
 - Where Councillors or staff members are successfully identified as the source of disinformation, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken in line with the Code of Conduct for Councillors and the Code of Conduct for municipal staff.

This approach ensures that the Municipality responds firmly but fairly to disinformation and harmful behaviour, while continuing to build trust through open, transparent, and respectful communication.

9. SERVICE DELIVERY COMMUNICATION – STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

9.1 Overview

Bergrivier Municipality recognizes the critical importance of timely, accurate, and coordinated communication regarding service delivery matters. Effective communication during service disruptions fosters trust, promotes transparency, and strengthens the Municipality's reputation as a responsible and responsive service provider.

Service delivery communications are the shared responsibility of all municipal Directorates. Active cooperation is essential to ensure that residents receive reliable information that helps them plan around disruptions and engage meaningfully with the Municipality.

This section outlines key scenarios requiring prompt communication, as well as the operational guidelines attached to these communications. This applies only in instances where the Municipality is the **primary service provider**.

9.2 Events Requiring Service Delivery Communication

It is important that guidelines are set up with regards to certain service delivery communications. This is in the interest of establishing trust with residents as well as building a responsible brand of good and effective service delivery. The cooperation of all the Directorates involved are essential to establish reliable service delivery communication. Events that must be covered in these guidelines are:

- Unexpected Power Outages
- Planned Power Outages
- Delays in Refuse Removal Services
- Water Outages / Shortages / Pipe Bursts
- Delays in Issuing of Municipal Accounts
- Emergencies or Unplanned Service Delivery Interruptions
- Severe Traffic Disruptions and / or delays
- Any municipal decisions impacting service delivery, even if localized to a specific town or ward

These situations demand a rapid and transparent response to minimize inconvenience to residents, maintain public confidence, and demonstrate that the Municipality is proactive and service-oriented. Communication lines to the Head: Communications must be established.

Guidelines for this are available in **ANNEXURE A**

9.3 Channels of Communication (Service Delivery Interruptions)

The Head: Communications will take the necessary steps to inform the following groups and stakeholders when a service delivery issue arises:

- Residents via Bergrivier Municipality’s official social media platforms;
- The relevant Ward Councillor – with a request to distribute the information to all relevant communication groups the Councillor has access to in his / her ward;
- The Ward Committee (via Ward WhatsApp Group); and
- Internal officials including the Municipal Manager and other relevant officials who need to be informed.

Other Communication channels that the Head: Communication may consider utilizing includes:

- Collab Citizen App
- Municipal Website
- Loud-hailing (depending on the time-frame and availability of staff)
- Physical municipal notices (relevant Directorate to ensure distribution to households)

It is fundamentally important that the Municipality ensures that internal communication lines between the various municipal Directorates and the Communications Section (Head: Communications) are clear and functional.

10. APPLICATION

The Head: Communications shall be responsible for the annual revision (if necessary) of the Communication Policy and may, in conjunction with the Municipal Manager, ensure that – where applicable – the necessary performance indicators be set in respect of the implementation and monitoring of responsibilities in terms of the policy.

11. CONCLUSION

Bergrivier Municipality’s Communication Policy is intended to ensure that the municipality functions in an organized and coordinated manner, with regards to the flow of communication within the organisation.

The intention of this policy is also to ensure that the organisation communicates in a standardized manner with unified messages. Adherence to this policy, will result in a coherent image for the municipality. The policy and its procedures are applicable to every staff member of the municipality. It falls within the scope of internal communication and must be communicated accordingly.

Throughout the communication process a united message must be communicated with the vision of a “Bergrivier: A prosperous community where all want to live, work, learn and play in a dignified manner” at its core.

ANNEXURE A: GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE DELIVERY COMMUNICATION (STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE)

Given the increasing expectations from the public for immediate and accessible information, particularly around services that impact residents, households and businesses, it is considered best practice for Category B municipalities like Bergrivier Municipality to engage directly with their residents during service disruptions. The population size and affordability of digital and online communications have pushed public expectations to expect more direct communications with residents. Regular and reliable communications aid in good relations between the organisation and the clients they serve. As the Municipality’s primary function is service delivery, it is also considered best practice from a business perspective to keep clients informed about activities that may or will impact their daily lives or their expectations with regards to the expected service delivery.

It is for this reason that guidelines are necessary, or in other words, a standard operating procedure, to ensure that all role players within the organisation know and comprehend what is expected of them when any of the below mentioned situations occur. Some of these events require immediate action, whilst others require timely action, but decisions should not be delayed on what must be done:

- Unexpected Power Outages
- Planned Power Outages
- Delays in Refuse Removal Services
- Water Outages / Shortages / Pipe Bursts
- Delays in Issuing of Municipal Accounts
- Emergencies or Unplanned Service Delivery Interruptions
- Severe Traffic Disruptions and / or delays
- Any municipal decisions impacting service delivery, even if localized to a specific town or ward

Communication lines to the Head: Communications must be established.

The Head: Communications will take the necessary steps to inform the following groups and stakeholders when a service delivery issue arises:

Guidelines for when relevant Directorates should inform the Communications Section of service delivery challenges:

Unexpected Power Outage	When an unplanned outage occurs affecting more than 10 households for longer than one (1) hour, a communication must be sent out ASAP. The relevant department must provide all the required information to the Communications Unit. In these instances, verbal approval by Director or Municipal Manager is acceptable. The signed version will then be used to communicate on the
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	relevant platforms.
Planned Power Outage	Planned outages are usually scheduled in advance. The affected community must be notified at least one week prior to the outage. The Communications Unit and Client Service Officers/Switchboard sections must be informed as well. The relevant department must provide all the required information to the Communications Unit, and eventually the final version signed by the Director. The signed version will then be used to communicate on the relevant platforms.
Delays in Refuse Removal Services	If an unexpected delay occurs of more than 6 hours for whatever reason, residents in the affected area should be informed. Where possible the reason should be provided, and alternative arrangements should be communicated timeously, if applicable. The Communication Unit must be informed timeously, with all required information about the unexpected delay. The Unit will then determine the appropriate communication platforms to utilise.
Water Outages / Shortages / Pipe Bursts	When an unplanned outage (water pipe burst) occurs affecting more than 10 households for longer than 1 hour, a communication must be drafted and sent out ASAP to the affected area. The relevant department requesting the work to be done must provide the Communication Unit with all required information timeously. Physical notices must be coordinated by the relevant department. The communication will also be issued electronically via WhatsApp Channel, relevant Ward Committee WhatsApp group, Collab Citizen App, and Facebook (if necessary).
Planned Water Interruptions	Planned water interruptions should be scheduled in advance. The affected community must be notified at least one week prior to the interruption in service. The Communications Unit and Client Service Officers/Switchboard sections must be informed as well. The relevant department must provide all the required information to the Communications Unit, and eventually the final version signed by the Director. The signed version will then be used to communicate on the relevant platforms.
Delays in Issuing of Municipal Accounts	If there is an unforeseen delay in the delivery of municipal accounts, the account holders should be informed in a timeous manner. Alternative arrangements should be discussed internally, and clear decisions must be communicated to residents. The platforms of communication will be discussed internally.

<p>Severe Traffic Disruptions and / or delays</p>	<p>In the event of scheduled road closures for maintenance, communications should be alerted to post on social media platforms one week before the work commences. The post should provide further details. This is to show that the Municipality is proactive in its approach to ensuring an informed public. Other severe and unplanned Traffic disruptions such as accidents should be communicated as soon as possible on relevant comms platforms.</p>
<p>Natis System Offline / Faulty Eye Testing Equipment</p>	<p>In the event of the Natis System going offline, the Traffic Services personnel must inform the Communications Unit immediately and provide all required details. Upon receipt of the information, the Communications Unit will issue a notification to all affected towns (residents) within one hour. This notification will provided issued via the official WhatsApp Channel, relevant Ward Committee WhatsApp Group, Collab Citizen App, including Bergrivier Municipality’s Facebook Page.</p>
<p>Emergencies or Unplanned Service Delivery Interruptions</p>	<p>Emergency Communication is provided for in the Crisis Communication Guideline or section in this policy. It is, however, advisable to handle every situation on a case-by-case basis, to determine if additional communications with residents is required in the form of social media and/or via the Collab Citizen APP & WhatsApp Channel.</p>
<p>Any municipal decisions impacting service delivery, even if localized to a specific town or ward</p>	<p>When a decision is taken that might halt, alter or in any way change a service rendered by the municipality, even if it affects only a specific towns or regions – timeous communication must take effect. This will require the relevant deparment to timeously provide all information to the Communications Unit.</p>