Ingquza Hill Local Municipality

INGQUZA HILL
LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Communications Policy
2025/2026

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Item

ACRONYMS

1. IHLM: Ingquza Hill Local Municipality
2. MM: Municipal Manager
3. HOC: Head of Communication
4. HOD: Heads of Units
5. ICF: Internal Communicators Forum
6. LCF: Local Communicators Forum
7. SOEs: State Owned Enterprises

1. INTRODUCTION

Ingquza Hill Local Municipality is committed to two-way communication, building relationships with its internal and external stakeholders and to further form partnerships with the public and private sector. The main purpose of this policy is to provide assert principles and guidelines for the communication of the municipality. The different roles and responsibilities within the municipal communication are made clear as to what is communicated, when and by whom. This policy will ensure that communication takes place in a coordinated, uniform and responsible manner.

(i)   COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) outlined the following pieces of legislation to be considered when practicing and dealing with Municipal Communication. These are as follows:

1. Constitution, Act 108 of 1996

2. Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000

3. Promotion of Access to Information Act 17 of 2000

4. The COMTASK Report

5. Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Framework Act, 2005

6. Organized Local Government Act, 1997

7. Media Development and Diversity Act, 2002

2. THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THIS POLICY

The Communication Policy is intended to ensure that Ingquza Hill Local Municipality recognises the significance of communication as a strategic management function and as an integral part of the municipality's daily functioning. The policy demonstrates that the municipality is committed and enthusiastic to a transparent and effective relationship with both internal and external stakeholders. The municipality will do so by a process of accountability, consultation, and responsiveness and through dissemination information. The municipality acknowledges that it has a responsibility to inform its stakeholders of identified issues, progress made, and results achieved in addressing its mandate.

The Communication Unit has a responsibility to ensure that all communication activities, which include procurement of services, are done in accordance with these policies and procedures. This requires all communication and communication-related activities to be co-coordinated and recommended by the Unit.

3. THE POLICY STATEMENT

This policy seeks to provide information to all stakeholders about municipality programs and delivering of goods and services. The dissemination of information to stakeholders will be done in an accurate, clear, effective, timeous, reasonable, responsible, relevant and comprehensible manner. This seeks to; -

- ensure that municipality reports and achievements with regard to scope of mandate are communicated effectively; and
- ensure that municipality's information is accessible and answerable to the public it services.
- Ensure that the municipality accounts for all its programmes and activities.

Communication must reflect overall municipality programs and government priorities.

4. COMMUNICATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to ensure effective communication and compliance to this policy, the following roles and responsibilities are adopted:

4.1. The Mayor

The Mayor (as the head of the municipality) is the Chief Communicator of the municipality. He/she (the Mayor) can delegate these roles and responsibilities to the Municipal Manager whenever required. The Mayor together with the Municipal Manager and Head of Communication Unit will be responsible for defining the annual communication priorities such as achievement, objectives and requirements. This is done in consultation with the Management Team.

4.2 The Municipal Manager

The Municipal Manager (MM) is the Spokesperson of the municipality on strategic and operational issues. He ensures that the annual communication strategy is in line with municipal communication objectives and reflects the municipality's priorities. The MM will be responsible for the integration of the communications function within the municipality's decision-making processes and the integration of strategic communication planning in the overall planning of the municipality. The Municipal Manager may delegate the role and responsibility of a Spokesperson to any person who have ability and capacity to perform.

4.3 Heads of Departments

Heads of Departments are responsible for; -

- Ensuring compliance with the Municipality's Communication Policy and

Procedures:

- When and if required, attending to media inquiries through Communication Unit;
- Ensure that key communication issues and priorities are identified annually in line with the municipality communication strategy and,
- That their programs have communication action plans through consultation with the Communication Unit.

4.4. Head of Communication

The Head of Communication serves as the municipal authority on communication issues. He/she is responsible for co-coordination of all communications activities including the procurement of communication materials and services. This includes facilitating the appointment of communication service providers, consultants and communication activities by Supply Chain or Procurement Office of the Municipality. All these activities must be either approved or recommended by him/her. The Head of Communication must assist the Municipal Manager in ensuring that Communication Policy and its procedures are communicated to staff and adhered to. He/she is responsible to provide communication advice and counsel to the Mayor and Municipal Manager.

4.5 Municipal Spokesperson

The Municipal Spokesperson is responsible for co-ordinating and liaison with the media, updating social media networks, websites, arranging media briefings and breakfast, conferences, the issuing of media statements and handling media queries. He/she is responsible for both Mayor and Municipal Manager's media liaison. He / She is responsible for writing Mayor and other Office Bearer's speeches.

4.6 Communications Unit

Communications Unit is responsible for co-coordinating all communications activities in the municipality. In this regard, the Communications Unit shall support and co-ordinate all communication efforts with the main aim of enabling the Mayor and Municipal Manager to perform their function as Chief Communicators. It shall provide strategic advice and counsel with regard to communication policy development, programme planning and programme implementation.

Communication Unit is further responsible for development and implementation of communication plans and production of publications for information dissemination. The Communication Officer exists for and is responsible for all the communication requirements of the Municipality that deal with these functional areas which includes identifying communication issues, developing communication strategies, implementing and managing communication actions such as: campaigns, events, advertising, design and printing of communication materials (depending on the availability of necessary expertise), audio-visual and still communication, marketing and communication research.

4.7 Communicator's Forums

Internal Communication Forum (ICF) and Local Communicator's Forum (LCF) are serving as strategic platforms for information sharing and coordination. ICF deals with internal matters, i.e. interdepartmental, and LCF involves both internal and external stakeholders. Both Fora are in place and they sit quarterly.

5. PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS

The following Procedures and Regulations are the rules that govern the implementation of the Communication Policy.

5.1 Media Relations

The Communications Unit is the municipality's first line of contact with the media and is responsible for co-coordinating all media relations. The following procedures must be followed with regards to media liaison; -

- It is advisable that before responding to media queries, Communications Unit be consulted. In a situation where this is not possible, the response must be signed off by the relevant Head of Department and copied to Head of Communications.
- All media queries must be referred to the Communications Unit who will then engage with the relevant line functionaries for an adequate response. The Communication Unit should ideally always coordinate interactions with the media, such as media conferences, briefings, engagements, letters to the media and advertising.
- The Communications Unit is responsible for media evaluation and monitoring. A media monitoring service is available from the Communications Unit. Items of importance will be circulated to those impacted upon, either for information purposes or for a draft response.

- Media queries are to be dealt with within the stipulated deadline or otherwise within 24 hours with exclusive of weekend which will be within 72 hours. Inquiries received after hours will only be dealt with during office hours unless there is obvious urgency or instruction to do so.
- Enquiries from the media should be in writing. Responses are to be supplied in writing except for radio and television interviews. Media queries must be treated as top priority.

5.2 Internal Communicator's Forum

The main purpose of internal communicator's forum is to facilitate and manage the flow of information within the municipality to create an informed workforce. Internal communications involve information about municipality programmes, relevant human resource information and other useful information that staff may have an interest in from all municipal internal departments. The following communication tools and mediums are used to communicate with staff members; -
Internal memo, Posters, Notice Boards, Intranet (Emails), Workshops, Staff meetings, Toilet notice boards, SMS, and Pay slips.

5.3 Local Communicator's Forum

The main purpose of local (external) communicator's forum is to inform stakeholders of services and programmes of the municipality, both provincial and national government departments, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and Non-governmental Organisations). Different communication tools and mediums are used to communicate with stakeholders; -
Billboards, Letters, Notice Boards, Radios, Television, Roadshow Exhibitions, Conferences, Summits, Workshops, Social Media (Facebook and WhatsApp) Internet and Newspapers.
All external communication campaigns carried out by internal municipal departments must be approved by the Communication Unit.

5.4 Production of Communication Material

The Communication Unit must be consulted on communications material that is produced on behalf of the municipality. Decisions to outsource such activity or part thereof must carry the approval of the Head of Communication.

5.5 Advertising

Communication Unit is responsible for advertising and further co-coordinate all advertising activities. The Communication Unit must approve all advertising or procurement of advertising

services. No contract or payment can be signed without the approval of the Head of Communications or his/her representative. In all instances the correct procurement procedures should be followed. Heads of Units must compliment the budget.

5.5 Corporate Image

Communication Unit is responsible for the corporate image of the municipality. This responsibility includes the following: -

- The look and feel of the municipality's office buildings.
- The type of communication material to be used by the municipality i.e. letterheads, templates, products, etc.
- The way communication material is used and produced i.e. the font, use of logo's, corporate identity, etc.
- The official Municipal Logo with the name of the municipality must appear in full all Official Municipal documents. There must be Corporate Identity Manual which must specify clearly how the Logo shall be used.

5.7 Branding and Promotional Material

The Promotional material using the corporate identity of the municipality may only be used for official purposes. The production of such material must be authorised by the Communication Unit. Branded merchandise is an integral part of the municipality branding strategy and as such cannot be developed without the approval of the Communication Unit.

The use of the municipality logo on projects not initiated by the municipality has to be approved by the Communication Unit. Strict adherence to the corporate identity is a given with the development of any branded material.

5.8 Procurement of communication materials

The Communication materials include any type of publication, newsletter, magazine, brochure, audio visual material and any other material intended to convey to the public information. Communication Unit has the responsibility of ensuring that communication products and services, including that of consultants, or services are acquired in a fair and equitable manner. The Communications Unit must be consulted on procurement processes for communication. It is advisable to make use of the Communication Unit's in-house service, depending on the type of project, the time frames, capacity available and budgets.

5.9 Website

The municipality's Internet site serves as its window to the public and as such the Communications Unit has the following responsibility: -

- The Head of Communication Unit or a delegated official has the sole responsibility of placing and removing material from the Municipality website.
- Information will be placed on the site only after the approval of a Unit Head or a delegated official not lower than the rank of Manager.
- It is the responsibility of individual Units to provide information for their web pages.
- The creation of links on the Municipality website and or acceptance of a link of the Municipality website to another website will only be done after the approval of the Head of Communication Unit.

An E-Communications Forum made up of IT and Communications officials is responsible for approving all IT related projects.

6. Social Network Utilisation

Social media has become an acceptable means of communication and has afforded local governments the opportunity to engage with users using a personal and more direct approach. It has narrowed the gap between local government and communities. As social media has become, in most cases, the chosen medium for communication, it is only natural that IHLM takes a step towards this form of communication to keep up with the changes that are taking place globally. This also enables interactive communication that is not possible via other platforms. Such interactivity allows for the exchange of perspectives and opinions among multiple audiences. It also allows effective and efficient communication to take place where those conversations are already occurring. With this subject, IHLM is taking responsibility to implement effective communication through social media platforms.

6.1. Social Media Accounts Management

- Municipal Departments must submit approved content to be uploaded on social media to the Head of Communication.
- The Communications Section is responsible for ensuring that content on all social media platforms is always updated and relevant.
- The Communications Section is expected to respond to positive or negative developments from engagements.
- The Communications Section will be responsible for the monitoring and reporting of the respective social media accounts.

- The Communication Section will be responsible for ensuring adherence and reviewing of this policy.

6.2. Social media code of conduct

For IHLM Municipal Employees

- Nothing about social media changes the responsibilities and obligations of employees or contractors of IHLM.
- It does not matter if employees or contractors use a private account or access social media outside of work hours – their obligations in terms of their contract of employment, the Code of Conduct, and all other applicable policies apply to all of their conduct on social media.
- Employees or contractors of the IHLM have a legal duty to act in good faith towards the Municipality. They may therefore not do anything that damages or tarnishes the reputation of the institution and must always act in the best interests of the organisation. This duty extends to their use of social media. For example, employees may not comment negatively on social media about anything associated with IHLM.
- Everything employees do and say on social media reflects on the IHLM and its reputation. In conducting themselves on social media, it is important that employees use sound judgment and common sense, act with professionalism and integrity, and adhere to Municipality's values.
- Employees who violate any terms set out in this policy will be subjected to Disciplinary Processes.

6.3. Personal Social Media Accounts

- Where municipal employees and/ or councillors use social media platforms and wish to provide personal comments on these platforms, they could contravene the accepted Code of Conduct and bring the municipal service into disrepute or be misinterpreted as being an official representative of IHLM. 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).
- Any personal social media accounts, or accounts unrelated to the IHLM, that currently exist or will be created in future, are not to be registered using a Municipal e-mail address. This applies to any social media platform that requires an e-mail account to register. These accounts must make use of private e-mail addresses and contact details.

7. Language and Translations

The Ingquza Hill Local Municipality usage of languages is based on the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) and the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000). In this regard, it considers the language preferred by residents when communicating. IsiXhosa and English are languages used by the municipality in all official notes and advertisements issued for general public information must be published in isiXhosa and English.

8. Copyright

The municipality owns all publicity material and information it has paid for or created. Accordingly, the reproduction of any such material requires the approval of the municipality. Copyright to the municipality allows the municipality the freedom to allow others to use the material without paying fees to the original producer. It also gives the municipality the authority to prevent misuse of the material by the producer or anyone else.

9. Exhibitions

The Communications Unit is responsible for Branding and Corporate Identity of the municipality as stated in (5.7. which deals with Branding and Promotional material). The Unit must be consulted when departments are taking part in exhibitions on behalf of the municipality.

10. Events

The events shall be organised as prescribed in the Municipality's or Council's Events calendar and Communication Unit shall take full responsibility for media, publicity and branding.

11. Training and Development

The Communication Unit shall identify communication-training courses (assisted by Skills Development Office) for Municipal Officials and Councillors who interact with media and public. Service Providers hired to assist in carrying out communication-related services must be engaged on the Contract or Agreement by Council to work closely with officials so that skills can be transferred.

12. Communication in crisis situation

The crisis situation is every organisation's worst nightmare. In this regard, it is important that a framework for such a situation be developed. In the event of a crisis situation, the following should be adhered to; -

- The Director/Manager in whose area of responsibility is involved should inform his/her Unit Head.
- The Head of communications is to be copied the information.
- A Crisis Committee will consist of the MM or relevant Directors/Managers, Head of Communication and relevant officials.
- The Mayor is to be informed immediately.
- A plan of action is to be drafted.
- The Crisis Committee will manage the issue, communication thereof and release the necessary statements with the involvement of the Mayor. The Mayor and MM will act as Chief Communicator's Spokespersons. No media statement or interview is allowed from any other officials.
- Staff members will be kept informed of the situation.
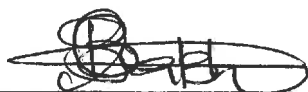
13. Procedures and Compliance

This policy is intended to ensure that the municipality engages all communication-related issues in a co-coordinated manner with regard to communications and communicates in a standardised manner with unified messages. Adherence to the policy will result in a coherent image for the municipality. This communication policy and its procedures are applicable to every staff member in the municipality. The communication policy falls within the scope of internal communications, and it will be communicated accordingly.

14. Transgressions And Consequence Management

Any action or behaviour by Councillors or members of staff, which is in conflict with this Policy, will be deemed a transgression of the Code of Conduct of Councillors or Staff members, as the case may be.

Approved by Council on this .30..of ..June........ 2025.

Signed by

Cllr. S.B. Vatsha
Speaker of the Council