



## **BUSHMAN'S RIVER MOUTH**

Ratepayers' Association / Belastingbetalersvereniging Ward 3 / Wyk 3  
P.O.Box 50, Bushman's River Mouth, 6190

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The Minister  
Provincial and Local Government  
Private Bag X805  
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### **Comments on Local Government DPLG Document White Paper "Process"**

These comments are made in the same sequence of the questions posed in the publication in local newspapers and on the DPLG website and pertain to the Ndlambe Municipality and Bushman's River Mouth area more specifically.

- 1) Municipalities can be far more effective by having efficient internet websites where information is posted. This can include programmes, finances, budgets, SDF documents, IDP documents, projects and proposed developments. Critical issues for particular areas can be posted on notices boards for those who do not have computer access, especially, where those projects will or can affect those communities. The information needs to be updated on a regular basis. Provision should be made for community comment and input on both the electronic notice boards and the physical notice boards.
- 2) Ward committees are often poorly attended. They can be made more effective by the mandatory attendance of municipal officials from each department, especially when issues pertaining to that department are on the agenda or minutes of the previous meeting. The municipal official need not be the department head or director but could be a deputy or official who is briefed to answer questions on the ward agendas. These officials should also be able to provide progress reports/updates on questions from previous meetings, projects, actions taken etc.
- 3) Transparency is key to successful government. Mayoral committees often make decisions which are not transparent which leads to suspicion. Timetables and budgets need to be decided openly and monitored with accountability on the part of the decision makers. Correct accounting and financial reporting should be mandatory. No single municipal official should be able to sign orders or payments. Correct paperwork should accompany all orders and payments above predetermined set thresholds, budgets and codes.
- 4) Planning, projects and issues in local communities should be done in consultation with those communities by the ward councillors on a regular basis. The ward committee meetings are an opportune forum for the process. Councillors and ward committee members should be representative of communities. The ward committee members should then report back to those communities which they represent. It is imperative that ward councillors visit communities in their wards regularly, to be informed, and experience, at ground level of problems in the area. The ward system cannot function correctly if it only consists of a two monthly ward meeting. There should be predetermined lines of communications (telephone, central point to receive memos, fax, email etc) by the ward councillor.
- 5) Political and administrative components can be separated in a similar manner in which a successful business is run. These two elements should be exclusive with an understanding of laws and government initiatives by both parties. The tasks are set by

Council (board) and the municipality (management) implements them. The council (board) should not have control of finance as this is an administrative management function. The

Council should have access to financial data and be able to question any aspect of the accounts. A well defined IDP with projects and time lines and deadlines should suffice in the smooth transition from any one administration to another. Visionary town planning and project management is essential in this area. If town planners are not available locally contractors could be used.

- 6) Organized local government cannot be an effective role for intergovernmental government representivity. That role should be played by the district municipality which should be informed regularly as to local needs, problems etc by the numerous local municipalities. The intergovernmental role is a broader overall role.
- 7) The greatest challenge is between political agendas and community needs or requests. The problem is structural because councillors are political appointees and not necessarily community representatives. The district municipality should monitor, assist and support local municipalities as local municipalities often do not have expertise or objective vision. There have been several cases of political and self interest above community needs. If a councillor goes against political agendas in place of community needs they are at risk of being sidelined and even expelled from political party lists for election. Previously councillors were elected on a non political basis on a community service agenda (early 1960's) and the government of the day then introduced party political candidates. There is no free vote. Organized local government should play a management function role in municipalities i.e. audit, financial management and performance and project management functions. This is against understanding that, according to the Municipal Systems Act, the responsibility of the ward councillor is, firstly, to the community they represents and then their political responsibility to their party.
- 8) The transparency of decisions, financial budgeting, spending and accounting with checks and balances and regular external audits is essential to combat corruption. Accounting against projects with quotations and tenders with all documentation available for public scrutiny. People with financial interest or potential financial gain should be excluded from the decision making process and recuse themselves from meetings on those particular projects. Any public figures should make all assets and liabilities open for inspection by auditors on demand.
- 9) A two tier system is difficult in an operational sense but not in a management sense. The roles of local and district municipalities should be clearly defined. The local municipality should concentrate on operational issues and the district municipality on management issues. Having said that, the local municipality also needs to have managerial skills for example project and financial management. The current system is resulting in declining service delivery levels because of lack of supervision and operational management. Local HR is lacking and possibly PPP should be used to improve systems of service delivery. Planning on a local level also has a great deal to be desired. There is a complete lack of local planning skills and the district municipality can play an important roll in planning because of a more objective view.
- 10) District municipalities should monitor, roll out broad policy parameters, broad planning over several municipalities (i.e. water, roads, sewerage, electrical networks, economic development planning and housing) and support and supplement local municipal shortfalls in management skills.
- 11) Local municipalities should concentrate on operational issues and maintenance. They should also inform the district as to developmental needs, pressures and issues.

- 12) Local municipalities are on the ground and should be able to record developmental needs and issues. They are at the coal face of the development but may not necessarily see the broader picture in regional terms. Development locally usually takes place with development of regional infrastructure development which is a district municipal role. The local municipality may have requests and pressure for certain deliverables whether it be water, roads, communications or electrical networks but the broad development needs to be looked at regionally with neighbouring municipalities and development criteria.
- 13) Big cities and towns can serve as examples of what has been done, what should be done and what should not have been done. The big municipalities also have the resources for policy development which local municipalities do not have. They can be used by local municipalities as blue prints and guidelines for local policy. They give broad guidelines as to local, smaller municipal development. There are both good and poor examples.
- 14) Communities, NGO's etc should be represented on the ward committees and through those ward committees they can exert pressure on local municipalities to improve local service delivery. This however depends on the functionality of the ward committees and the powers of those committees. It also depends on the representatives of those ward committee members who should and are not always representative of broad sectors of the community.
- 15) Public-private and public-public initiatives can go a long way to improve service delivery. There is often a degree of nepotism in the municipality, lack of motivation and pride. Privatization of some functions should be considered where lack of capacity and or skills is evident.
- 16) Alternative technology and innovation are always available. The key is transparency as to needs in service delivery. Place advertisements for PPP for deliverables. These need not necessarily be tenders but expressions of interest for solutions to problems.
- 17) The service delivery levels locally are poor and declining with time. There is generally a lack of supervision, management and project management of service delivery. There is also a lack of HR. This does, however, change in degree from ward to ward. Employees are aware of the huge salaries which the section 57 Directors earn and feel hard done by when they see their net wage or salary packet. Everything from waste removal to waste disposal, water quality and quantity, sewerage reticulation and treatment, road construction and repair, storm water management, housing quality and numbers is at various levels of crisis. There has to be a marked improvement in work ethics, acceptance of responsibility, training and accountability. These types of interventions should result in a huge improvement in productivity.
- The local municipality failed the auditor general report for 4 years in a row. None of the municipal waste sites, in some local areas, are legally licensed with necessary permits from DEAET and DWAF. The operation of these sites is also done in an illegal manner. Sewerage treatment is poor and substandard water is released into the environment. Sewerage containment is atrocious, sewerage backflows into houses and conservancy tanks is constantly overflowing into the street and river. Roads in some of the townships are impassable. RDP houses are poorly built with excellent materials (they require repair before occupation), RDP houses have not been built and have been paid for which leaves recipients in an untenable situation (This is since 2002). Water and other infrastructure is not in place prior to houses being built. This results in backlogs which are not attended to and to the detriment of those households.
- Improvement in service delivery could be enhanced by contracting out refuse collection, refuse disposal, water supply, sewerage treatment, road repair and construction. The municipality would only have to play a monitoring role and organize planning.
- There is a complete lack of planning within the municipality with regard to town planning, poor building control and monitoring of service levels. If the municipality had to provide the monitoring and planning rather try and deliver and monitor the delivery levels

(Internally) there would be an automatic improvement in service delivery levels because the delivery and monitoring would be mutually exclusive and not the same body.

There needs to be a concerted effort made to employ people on merit irrespective of colour, race, creed, political party, municipal connection or religion.

The idea of performance bonuses for directors is nonsense as they monitor and the award is the same body. It would be better to offer performance bonus to the workers so that they could have some type of incentive.

A problem exists with the equitable service delivery over the whole of Ndlambe. All of the directors sit in Port Alfred and rarely move out of their environment. All the essential decisions are made from Port Alfred and basically what is not seen is not dealt with.

Operational efficiency is not monitored as there are few managers of departments outside Port Alfred. There is also a lack of cooperation between various departments.

- 18) National and Provincial government need to place management and monitoring systems within municipalities. Provincial government should audit service and project delivery levels and introduce project management. Municipal officials should be made responsible and if the basic levels of service delivery are not met within specified time limits the officials should be reprimanded or even dismissed.
- 19) Municipalities can dramatically improve communication by acknowledging and answering mail or letters sent to them to address problems. In over 40 letters sent to the municipality in the past year not one has been acknowledged or answered. An efficient website where all information is posted would also help improve communication. Service delivery projects, budgets and progress should be updated on a monthly basis. Specific projects in wards should be posted on notice boards with progress updates. All ward based projects should have progress reports at ward committee meetings. If progress is not made the District Municipal officials should be informed and audit the situation at the request of the ward committee.
- 20) These are National and international problems. Local municipalities should be guided by National government. There are more than enough national laws but no policing of these laws. The local municipality needs to function as a law enforcement body as far as environmental laws are concerned.
- 21) The environmental laws are clear but are not monitored or policed. The local municipality, themselves, are in violation of several environmental laws. There should not be any problem for development to take place in a sustainable manner within the parameters of national environmental regulations. The matter all comes down to planning in a sustainable, environmentally friendly manner which is visionary.

Yours faithfully,

Johann Smuts  
Chairman Bushman's River Mouth Ratepayers Association.