

ABAQULUSI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



INTEGRATED COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

2021 – 2026

(Reviewed annually)

INTEGRATED COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM POLICY - 2021 -2026

1. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring that public service complaints are handled effectively and rights of redress upheld is an integral feature of good governance and effective service delivery. As Public Services we need to commit ourselves into ensuring excellent service to the citizens and this needs to be done in a professional and efficient manner.

We cannot shy away from challenges that may arise from time to time and at times expectations are not met due to various reasons. Therefore, citizens need to be given different platforms where they can communicate with the Municipality in order to resolve those issues they may have. These platforms can also be utilised as a way of complimenting and praising the Municipality for excellent work done.

Having this in place, will minimise the number of service delivery protests as issues can be attended to in record time before they escalate. With the support and involvement of Municipal Rapid Response; ICMS ensures that community redresses are nipped at the bud timeously.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND FRAMEWORK AS PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION

- 2.1. Ensure that the Municipality has a feedback mechanism whereby citizens can communicate the Municipality when services are not being delivered in line with the expectations as enshrined in the eight Batho Pele Principles;
- 2.2. Provide a uniform approach to complaints management within the Public Service
- 2.3. Provide guidance on how to develop an effective complaints and compliments management system;
- 2.4. Set standards that should be used to judge whether existing complaints systems are adequate
- 2.5. Laydown procedures and principles to be followed when developing a complaints and compliments management system and the manner in which the actual complaints lodged should be handled;
- 2.6. Set out principles which should underpin the development, implementation, monitoring and reviewing of complaints management systems
- 2.7. Highlight the most common causes of complaints about services with a view to creating awareness to the Municipality as to improve its services.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1. ICMS policy has been developed for a period of five years and will be reviewed annually should the need arise as the needs of the communities may change from time-to-time
- 3.2. The ICMS should be guided by the 8 Batho Pele principles
- 3.3. It should be in line with the Public Service Charter
- 3.4. It should adapt to the Public Service Regulations
- 3.5. It should be done within the parameters of the Constitutional and Legislative Framework primarily informed by Chapter 10 of the Constitution which deals with public administrations

4. PRINCIPLES TO BE FOLLOWED

- 4.1. **Consultation** – citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and where possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered
- 4.2. **Service Standard** – citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect
- 4.3. **Access** – all citizens should have equal access to which they are entitled
- 4.4. **Courtesy** – citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration
- 4.5. **Information** – citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive
- 4.6. **Openness and Transparency** – citizens should be told how the Municipality is run, costs and who is in charge
- 4.7. **Redress** – if the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response
- 4.8. **Value for Money** – public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money

5. ROLE OF MUNICIPALITY IN ICMS

- 5.1. Manage the Municipal Complaints Register
- 5.2. Refer complaints meant for sector departments and/ or any other organisations
- 5.3. Appoint an official to manage complaints
- 5.4. Ensure that the appointed official records complaints using the complaint form and prepare monthly progress report
- 5.5. Provide reports on complaints received using the reporting format
- 5.6. Nominate representative to sit in the Complaints Management Committee
- 5.7. Align ICMS functions to the Municipal Rapid Response
- 5.8. Review ICMS policy annually
- 5.9. Officials handling complaints must be independent of the issue of the complaint and the Municipality must ensure that officials dealing with complaints undergo security screening
- 5.10. To protect confidentiality and privacy, officials involved in complaints resolution must ensure that information is restricted only to those affected by the complaint

6. ROLE OF FRONTLINE WORKERS

- 6.1. Receive and refer complaints to the relevant units
- 6.2. Acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant
- 6.3. Ensure that the complaints are registered in the complaints management register to allow necessary follow-up
- 6.4. Refer or transfer the complaints to relevant unit for interventions
- 6.5. Officials handling complaints must be independent of the issue of the complaint and the Municipality must ensure that officials dealing with complaints undergo security screening

- 6.6. To protect confidentiality and privacy, officials involved in complaint resolution must ensure that information is restricted only to those affected by the complaint
- 6.7. When necessary, a sensitive complaint that may need to be disclosed to others, must be clarified and consent to do so be secured from complainant
- 6.8. Where conflict of interest arises for an employee involved in the receipt or management of a complaint, the relevant supervisor must be informed and alternative arrangements be made to deal with the complaint
- 6.9. Requests by complainants to remain anonymous must be respected at all times
- 6.10. Action must be taken on anonymous complaints and feedback publicized through various Municipal media channels

7. MECHANISM FOR LODGING COMPLAINTS

Complaints may be lodged in a variety of ways through platforms such as:

- 7.1. A verbal expression after the deficient act or action with respect to the service
- 7.2. A complaints/ suggestion box
- 7.3. A walk-in by the complainant
- 7.4. A telephone call to a call centre or office
- 7.5. A fax to a call centre or office
- 7.6. A letter or email to the call centre or office
- 7.7. A web based complaints lodging system
- 7.8. An SMS/ WhatsApp messaging
- 7.9. A social media system; and
- 7.10. Any other mechanism that is user-friendly and that is accessible to people with special needs

8. TURNAROUND TIME FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

- 8.1. **25 working days** from the time that COMPLEX complaints are lodged
- 8.2. Within **24 hours** for any other complaints
- 8.3. Within **seven working days** for community complaints with a potential of turning into a protest – Municipal Rapid Response leads the consultation process
- 8.4. Within **30 working** days for complaints lodged through complaints/ suggestion box

9. THREE STAGE PROCESS FOR MANAGING COMPLAINTS

Specifically for 25 to 30 working days of lodging the complaint

- 9.1. **First stage (immediate attention and resolution)** - The front-line service staff deals with the initial submissions of complaints and attempt to resolve them. If not resolved, a verbal complaints becomes a written complaint which should be referred to the second stage
- 9.2. **Second stage (maximum 15 working days)** – Complaints at this stage should ideally be acknowledged within five working days and resolved within 15

working days from the time they are received from stage one. If a complaint cannot be resolved within 15 working days. It should be escalated to stage three for internal review and the complainant should be advised of the escalation in writing and a copy should be sent to the Head of Department for noting.

- 9.3. **Third stage (internal review – maximum working days)** – Someone with higher authority carries out a further investigation and reviews the complaint. This person must take a fresh look at the evidence and not merely rely on the findings of the second stage. Then a solution to the problems is developed and implemented. This stage requires that the accounting officer or someone delegated by the accounting officer signs off on the solution on stage three.

10. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

The Municipality needs a written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the management of complaints. The SOP includes:

- 10.1. Types of complaints that citizens may lodge whether individual, area based, community based or organisational related
- 10.2. Procedure for lodging a complaint including telephonic complaints
- 10.3. Procedure for acknowledgement of a complaint
- 10.4. Procedure for investigating a complaint
- 10.5. Risk rating procedure for determining the required action to be taken according to severity of the complaint
- 10.6. Categorisation procedure for identifying patterns in systems failures
- 10.7. Procedure for redress
- 10.8. Timelines to be adhered to
- 10.9. Procedure around recording of statistical data on complaints including the indicators for complaints
- 10.10. Monitoring mechanism and their response timeline
- 10.11. Mechanism to ensure children's participation in the complaints process
- 10.12. Mechanism to ensure that vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, the elderly, mentally ill, illiterate and people speaking foreign languages can easily participate in the complaints process

11. ADMINISTRATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE THREE STAGE PROCESS

- 11.1. **Screening and logging** – This is the initial step where important information such as the name of the complainant, nature of complaint, the action taken, the citizen's response; place and date are captured. A reference number and contact details must be supplied to the citizen.
- 11.2. **Investigating** – This is a step whereby staff members are engaged in a research activity to ascertain the legitimacy of the problem. The complainant interacts with the complaints handling officers and is required to give full details. This will provide more facts that will help in making the decision to resolve the problem.
- 11.3. **Acknowledging progress or additional information required** – When the complaints cannot be resolved immediately, it is important to let the citizens know that the matter is receiving attention. Prompt acknowledgement will set

the citizens at ease, demonstrate that care is given and begin the process of preserving goodwill. Procedures should always have time limits

- 11.4. **Formulating a solution** – A solution must consistent with the constitutional mandate and existing policies of the Municipality and the Batho Pele principles
- 11.5. **Responding** – A response should be clear and appropriate. The citizens must understand the response, and it must address the issues raised in the citizen's original complaint

12. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 12.1. A system to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the ICMS should be put in place.
- 12.2. This should be done by developing key performance indicators or checklist against which to measure the performance. Key performance indicators should include:
 - a) Approved complaints management system by Exco and Council
 - b) Efficiency of the complaints managements system in resolving complaints within the prescribed turnaround time
 - c) Ability of the complaints management system to ensure accountability of the public officials
 - d) Citizen satisfaction
 - e) Employee satisfaction measures

13. ESTABLISHMENT OF ICMS COMMITTEE

The establishment of Complaints Management Committee is in line with Section 79 of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 and it comprises of:

- a) Office of the Municipal Manager
- b) Office of the Speaker
- c) Representative from each Municipal Department
- d) Members of the Rapid Response Teams
- e) Municipal Legal Services and
- f) Neutral community representatives

10.1 Functions of the Committee:

- a) Oversee all complaints received by the Municipality including feedback provided
- b) Ensure effective and efficient management of the Municipalities Complaints register
- c) Provide input on complaints report received
- d) Ensure compliance with Guidelines provided by Cogta and any other complaints policies and guidelines

10.2 Sitting of the Committee:

The Committee must sit quarterly to track progress on all complaints affecting operations of the Municipality. As ICMS and Rapid Response are aligned; therefore the Committee that sits on Rapid Response is the same Committee that sits on ICMS.