Blouberg Municipality

CHAPTER 30: HUMAN RESOURCES COMMUNICATION POLICY

1.   PREAMBLE

Human resources communication takes various forms and is key to the success of the Municipality. Communication is key to the achievement of the aim to support, develop and value high quality staff members. Communication is also critical in engaging staff in the strategic direction of the Municipality, as detailed in the IDP.

2.   PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of all staff members in maintaining good human resources communication practice, the main communication channels available to staff members and how and when they might be used to be effective.

3.   SCOPE OF APPLICATION

The policy shall apply to all staff members of the Municipality.

4.   LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996)
- Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000)
- Labour Relations Act, 1995 (Act No. 66 of 1995)
- Minimum Information Security Standards (MISS).
- Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000)
- Electronic Communications Act, 2005 (Act No. 36 of 2005)
- Electronic Communication and Transaction Act, 2002 (Act No. 25 of 2002)
- Protected Disclosures Act, 2000 (Act No. 26 of 2000)

5.   DEFINITIONS

All terminology used in this policy shall bear the same meaning as in the Regulations or applicable legislation, or as defined and / or explained in the Glossary of Terminology in the Human Resources Policies Manual.

6. **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Well informed employees embrace change with easy and feel part of the institution.

7. **POLICY PROVISIONS**

7.1 **Guiding principles**

7.1.1 To ensure staff members are fully informed of all relevant Municipality activities, to enable them to be as effective as possible in their role and to support the strategic direction of the Municipality.

7.1.2 To ensure all staff members are aware of their responsibility for maintaining good human resources communication practice.

7.1.3 To provide easy access to essential, useful and engaging information for staff members.

7.1.4 To provide effective methods of communicating during serious incidences.

7.2 **Categories of information**

7.2.1 Different pieces of information shall require different channels of communication and shall be the responsibility of different people to disseminate.

7.2.2 The main categories of human resources messages within the Municipality are as follows:

(a) Strategic direction and management

This includes information from senior management and committees regarding the overall management of the Municipality and its strategic direction. This may be:

(i) updates on regular activities or committee decisions; or

(ii) new information and activities that need to be communicated to staff members in a timely and appropriate manner; or

(iii) communication of important information via management cascade.

(b) Day-to-day work-related information

This is the information staff members require to carry out their work day to-day. It is the responsibility of individuals and their colleagues and line managers to communicate this information effectively.

(c) Municipality-wide notices

(i) This is information that all staff members shall benefit from and can be generated by any function within the Municipality.

(ii) Such information may be news items, forthcoming events, useful advice or more formal notices and is the responsibility of the relevant Head of Department to channel it through the HRM Unit, or Municipal Manager if it is not human resources in nature, to disseminate to all staff members.

(d) Serious incidents

(i) The Municipality shall have a system or plan where serious incidents are detailed. Plans shall be in place for all effective channels of communication to be utilised where necessary.

(ii) During a serious incident, the team dealing with serious incidents shall be responsible for all communication and shall advise the HRM Unit should assistance in communicating be required.

7.3 Communication channels

The following is a summary of the primary and secondary channels available to staff members when communicating information in the above categories:

7.3.1 Primary channels

(a) Face-to-face communication

Communicating in person with colleagues is considered to be the most beneficial method of ensuring information and knowledge are shared. The conversational nature allows for greater understanding of the context of the message and encourages reflection, questioning and feedback. Here are some instances of face-to-face communication within the Municipality:

(i) Strategic communication

In some circumstances, senior management would require information to be disseminated through the Municipality via managers as quickly as possible and, as far as possible, via face-to face meetings where understanding of the information can be

assured and feedback can be gathered and discussed. It is vital that all staff members receive this information within a given timescale and that all staff members understand the intent and the outcomes of the information and are given an opportunity to discuss, comment and provide feedback.

(ii) Prescribed communication

There are some human resources policies and processes where face-to-face communication is prescribed, for example: the Performance Management Review / Assessment process requires a one-to-one discussion, as does many others.

(iii) All other face-to-face communication

(aa) In all other circumstances as part of the working environment, staff members are encouraged to meet with colleagues or use the telephone to discuss issues verbally, rather than relying on email or printed material. Whilst it is important to manage the amount of time spent in meetings, well-managed meetings or discussions are an effective and efficient way of sharing knowledge, solving problems and ensuring common understanding and appreciation of issues.

(bb) Face-to-face communication engenders greater trust and understanding than any other communication method. It is important therefore, that staff members have opportunities for one-to-one and group meetings with colleagues and their line managers on a regular basis and that dialogue in those meetings is two-way.

(b) Email

Email is one of the most common methods of communicating within the Municipality regulated by policy. Weekly all-staff members email bulletins shall be distributed on the day and time to be fixed by the HRM Unit from time to time. All-staff member's emails at all other times can be sent by individuals through to the HR Unit and shall be sent as necessary for timely information that is considered important to all staff members

(c) Website and /or Portal

The Municipality website shall include pages containing news items, events and links to useful information for staff members, and shall be maintained by the HRM Unit with the technical support of the Webmaster on a daily basis. Staff members are encouraged to use the website, whether on or off the workplace, in order to keep up to date with staff

member-related information. The portal, if created, shall be used to broadcast messages and emergency situations to staff members.

7.3.2 Secondary channels

(a) Municipality staff member magazine

This magazine, when published and distributed to all staff, shall be designed to provide more in-depth information into items of interest to staff members, including new developments in the Municipality, awards, successes, staff member profiles, future events and a regular update from the Mayor and / or Municipal Manager.

(b) Notice boards

There are notice boards across the Municipality workplaces displaying information for staff members. Staff members with responsibility for maintenance of notice boards shall ensure that information is advertised in a timely manner and, importantly, is removed when out of date.

(c) Printed material

Departments and services produce printed material for use by staff members. Any wishes to produce any printed material shall be mindful of corporate identity guidelines and shall contact the HRM Unit to discuss requirements.

(d) Social media and external websites

(i) Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and any other websites external to the Municipality sites are not within the preferred list of channels with which to communicate with staff members.

(ii) Staff members are reminded that use of social media, as with all communication when is undertaken on behalf of the Municipality, is subject to the Code of Conduct, the principles being respect and dignity in all correspondence. Where the Municipality has either official Facebook page for visitors or a Twitter account for all audiences, these are secondary channels as they cannot be relied on to reach all staff members.

7.4 Communicating with non PC-based staff members

7.4.1 Some staff members do not have regular access to a PC to check the website or their email accounts and may be missing important information. It is the

responsibility of line managers to ensure that information is passed to staff members in a timely manner, either verbally or in print.

7.4.2 To assist line managers, staff member pages on the website shall be formatted to print as notices that can be pinned to notice boards. All staff member emails shall be kept to a brief and concise format to allow them to be easily read in print.

7.5 Communicating change

Change shall be more widely understood and accepted if staff members are aware of it as early as possible. An understanding of the objectives and an involvement in the process will help staff members to accept and embrace change. Internal communication shall be a consideration from the beginning of major projects within the Municipality.

7.6 Professionalism in communication

7.6.1 In all communications, staff members are reminded of their responsibility to serve the interests of the Municipality and ensure appropriate content at all times.

7.6.2 Communication is undertaken on behalf of the Municipality, therefore is subject to the Code of Conduct, the principles being respect and dignity in all correspondence.

7.6.3 Staff members shall ensure appropriate response times are adhered to when communicating, particularly via email.

7.6.4 During absence or when staff members would not respond in a reasonable time, they shall provide an auto reply to their emails with details of an alternative contact.

7.7 Roles and responsibilities

7.7.1 The Municipal Manager or his / her delegated assignee(s) accept overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the policy.

7.7.2 The financial implications related to implementing this policy shall be qualified and quantified by HRM Unit in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer.

7.7.3 Heads of Department shall -

(a) ensure information is made available to all staff members in a timely manner and via appropriate channels.

(b) ensure managers have the relevant information available to communicate with their staff members effectively.

(c) maintain open channels of two-way communication and to listen to feedback and comment from all staff members.

7.7.4 Managers and supervisors shall -

(a) communicate regularly with their teams, preferably face to face, to ensure information is available and understood within the context of the Department and working environment.

(b) ensure they and their staff members are maintaining good communication practice in accordance with this Policy.

(c) maintain open channels of two-way communication, to listen to feedback and comment and to keep senior managers informed.

7.7.5 All staff members shall -

(a) ensure they are informed and have access to information to be as effective as possible in their role and to support the strategic direction of the Municipality.

(b) maintain good communication practice in accordance with this Policy.

(c) use channels of communication to keep managers and colleagues informed.

7.7.6 HRM Unit shall -

(a) disseminate information to staff members via all appropriate channels.

(b) offer guidance to any areas of the Municipality in maintaining good communication practice in accordance with this Policy.

8. POLICY MONITORING AND EVALUATION

8.1 This policy shall be implemented and effective once recommended by the Local Labour Forum and approved by Council.

8.2 Non-compliance to the stipulations contained in this policy shall be regarded as breach of Code of Conduct, which shall be dealt with in terms of the Code of Conduct.

8.3 Head of Corporate Services shall carry out the monitoring and evaluation of the policy's implementation.

9. POLICY APPROVAL

This policy was formulated by HR Management in consultation with the Local Labour Forum.

Authorised by Municipal Manager: Signature: _____ Date: 30/07/2024

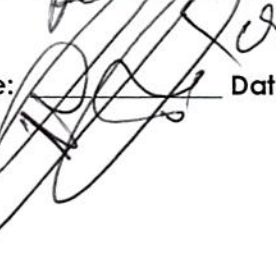**Recommended by Portfolio Committee on Corporate Services:** Signature: _____ Date: 30/07/2024

Approved by Municipal Council: Signature: _____ Date: ~~30/7/~~ 30/07/2024