

INDIGENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

In terms of section 74 of the Local Government : Municipal Systems Act of 2000, a Municipal Council must adopt and implement a Tariff Policy. In terms of section 74(i) of the Act in adopting a Tariff Policy, the Council should at least take into consideration the extent of subsidization of tariffs for poor households. This policy must provide procedures and guidelines for the subsidization of basic services and tariff charges to its indigent households.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Indigent Support Policy is to ensure the following:-

- The provision of basic services to the community in a sustainable manner, within the financial and administrative capacity of the Council; and**
- To provide procedures and guidelines for the subsidization of basic service charges to its indigent households, using the Council's budgetary provisions received from National Government, according to prescribed policy guidelines.**

The Council also recognizes that many residents simply cannot afford the cost of services provided and, for this reason; the Council will endeavour to ensure affordability through:-

- Setting tariffs that will balance the economic viability of continued service delivery; and**
- Determining appropriate service levels.**

DEFINITION OF AN INDIGENT

Indigents are defined as those people, due to a number of factors, who are unable to make monetary contributions towards basic services, no matter how small the amounts seem to be.

Any household earning less than the amount received from the Financial and Fiscal Commission from time to time qualifies to be registered as indigent. Currently the amount is R2400.00 per house hold. Typical examples are pensioners, students, the unemployed, disabled persons, single parents, child headed households.

REGISTRATION OF INDIGENT

- Registration points should be made publicly known and be accessible. A uniform registration form must be used in order to reach a common objective. After the application form has been completed , an effective and efficient evaluation system must be used in order to obtain the outcome within a reasonable time.**
- If a person is found to be indigent this must be registered in a database linked to a debtors system. This database must be regularly updated and audit trails of all changes must be kept and checked on at least a monthly basis.**

All indigents shall be re- evaluated within a maximum period of two years.

- Should an indigent's status change, then he/she must immediately notify the "indigents" office.**

Any consumer submitting fraudulent information will be will be liable for prosecution.

PROVISION OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES TO INDIGENT CUSTOMERS

Application for registration as an indigent customer

The member of a domestic household, who is responsible for the payment of the services, may apply for that household to be registered as indigent. Such applications shall be called for and evaluated annually by the Council.

Application for registration

A household that qualifies as an indigent customer must complete the application form as determined by the Council from time to time.

Any application must be accompanied by:-

- (i) documentary proof of income, such as a letter from the customer's employer or employers, a salary advice, a pension card, unemployment fund card; or**
- (ii) a sworn affidavit declaring unemployment or income; and**
- (iii) the customer's latest municipal account in his/her possession; and**
- (iv) a certified copy of the customer's identity document; and**
- (v) the names and identity numbers of all occupants over the age of 18 years who are resident at the property.**

A customer applying for registration as an indigent customer shall be required to declare under oath that all information provided in the application form and other documentation and information provided in connection with the application is true and correct.

The Municipality, ward councillor or its authorised agent shall counter-sign the application form and certify that the consequences and conditions of such an application for the customer were explained to the customer and that the customer indicated that the content of the declaration was understood.

INTERVENTION BY SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

In the interviewing process, during evaluation, cognizance must be taken of ages of the members of the families in order to determine who are physical fit. Skills and abilities of each of these members must be written down in order to group together people with the same interest and skills. If the skills are not suitably developed, special training courses will be given in capacity building.

Once these skills are adequately developed, specific programmes will be developed to make people self-sufficient - e.g.: shoemaking, gardening, painting, catering, etc.

The main objective in this would be to develop entrepreneurial skills for people enabling them to provide for themselves. Education in how to use less water and electricity should be part of this intervention.

The Procurement policy, already adopted, will encourage large community participation through the approach to source labour and other suppliers locally and joint ventures with SMME's

Regional consultative forums between government, business sectors and labour must also be formed. At such forums, an attempt must be made to deduct payment for services directly from salaries. At the same time, businesses must be lobbied to adopt labour intensive methods of production

COMMUNICATION

The community must be informed and the processes must be transparent to all. A policy must be supplied equitable and with fairness through the area of jurisdiction.

The end result must be focused on at all times, depending with whom one is in contract with. Favouring must be avoided at all times.

Communities must be treated with respect and be motivated by an Incentive based Approach rather than a punitive approach. In order to ensure that all indigent households are communicated to, an abroad based approach which combines both, a blanket coverage and a targeted one must apply.

MAXIMUM CONSUMPTION LEVELS FOR INDIGENTS

A benchmark that stipulates a maximum consumption level that indigents may have before credit control can apply to them must be established. It must ensure that Indigent households do not consume services excessively because that will render the policy ineffective in the long run. The indigent policy must be protected against misuse and fraudulent activities.

All amounts granted for indigent assistance as per services indicated below, will be placed in an indigent suspense account.

The suspense account mentioned above be written off against either monetary assistance received from central government, especially for that purpose and / or provisions made therefore in the budget of the Local authority once national guidelines on the treatment of indigents becomes available.

Classified indigent consumers will be held responsible for any consumption over and above the subsidies levies as indicated below.

Services will be suspended to indigents who fail to pay for the services consumed over and above determined levels which are not paid for in full.

All arrears of approved indigent households be placed in the indigent suspense account.

CONDITIONS

The Municipality or its authorised agent may upon approval of an application or any time thereafter -

(a) Install a pre-payment electricity meter for the indigent customer where electricity is provided by the Municipality or its authorised agent when implemented, thereby receiving 50Kwh per household per month; and subsidized rate as determined by the Council from time to time during the budgetary process.

(c) Registered indigents will be monitored on a monthly basis and restriction mechanisms will be introduced in cases where the consumption in excess of the free portion used is not paid for.

The allocation shall be as follows:

Refuse: full amount

Rates: full amount

Electricity: 50 kWh

NB:

Subject to the indigent tariff to a maximum of 350 kWh. If 350 kWh is exceeded, normal domestic tariffs would apply.

AUDITS

The Municipality may undertake regular random audits carried out by the Municipality or its authorised agent to -

- (a) Verify the information provided by indigent customers;**
- (b) Record any changes in the circumstances of indigent customers; and**
- (c) Make recommendations on the de-registration of the indigent customer.**

DE-REGISTRATION

- 1. Any customer who provides or provided false information in the application form and/or any other documentation and information in connection with the application shall automatically, without notice, be de-registered as an indigent customer from the date on which the Municipality or its authorised agent became aware that such information is false.**
- 2. An indigent customer must immediately request de-registration by the Municipality or its authorised agent if his/her circumstances, as derived from the information and criteria supplied, have changed to the extent that he/she no longer meets the qualifications of indigency of the Municipality.**
- 3. An indigent customer shall automatically be de-registered if an application is not made or if such application is not approved.**
- 4. An indigent customer shall automatically be de-registered if an audit or verification concludes that the financial circumstances of the indigent customer, has changed and no new application containing the new and/or**

changed circumstances has been submitted to the Municipality or its authorised agent for approval.

- 5. An indigent customer may at any time request to be de-registered as an indigent.**

POLICY ON PAUPER & INDIGENT BURIALS

DEFINITION

“Municipality” means the Umtshezi Local Municipality established in terms of section 155(6) of the Constitution, 1996, and established by and under sections 11 and 12 of the Local Government : Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No. 117 of 1998), read with sections 3, 4 and 5 of the KwaZulu-Natal Determination of Types of Municipality Act, 2000 (Act No. 7 of 2000).

PURPOSE

In terms of the current legislation the Municipality is obliged to dispose of the remains of persons found dead, in its area of jurisdiction, for whom no responsible agent can be found. The legislation also stipulates that the Municipality may also have cause to bury destitute people (indigent) for whom there is no other agent and where there are no resources – but is not obliged to do so.

PAUPER BURIALS

Paupers shall be defined as unknown/unclaimed dead bodies for whom no responsible agent can be found.

The cost of pauper burials shall be borne by the Municipality where the dead body was found.

Before any pauper burial is conducted, documentary proof from the South African Police Services (SAPS) confirming that indeed such body had no claimants would have to be submitted.

No grave stones shall be erected/allowed on paupers’ graves.

BURIAL OF THE INDIGENT/DESTITUTE

The indigent/destitute shall be defined as those whose next of kin are so poor that they cannot afford funeral expenses and they must be on the indigent

register.

The indigent family should submit the following documents together with the application for assistance:-

proof that the next of kin is/are not employed in the form of a sworn affidavit; in addition, a letter confirming that the family is living in poverty or destitution signed by a Social Worker from the Department of Welfare and Population Development, must be submitted;

A letter from a traditional authority, ward councillor or a local church organisation bearing an official stamp or in the organisation's letterhead confirming that the family resides in the local area and is poor and destitute.

No transportation will be provided by the Municipality to the bereaved family for attending the funeral.

The Municipality shall pay an amount of R1000.00 to a reputable funeral undertaker for the burial costs, subject to funds being available on the budget.

GENERAL

All applications and/or motivations for paupers and destitute persons shall be submitted to the Community Services Directorate, for authorisation by the Municipal Manager or her authorised representative(s).