

**LANGUAGE POLICY  
OF THE  
CITY OF TSHWANE**

*as amended and approved  
27 September 2012*

## QUOTES THAT INSPIRED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS LANGUAGE POLICY

*All people shall have equal right to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs.*

The Freedom Charter, 1955

*A multilingual policy is an integral part of the transformation of South Africa to full participatory democracy. People cannot be expected to comply with laws if they cannot understand them.*

Kristina Cunningham

*This book [The Long Walk to Freedom] has been translated into practically all the languages of the world. I can go to any place on earth and my story can be found in that language. Here I exist only in English. I want to be part of all the languages of my country. One's language should never be a dead end. That is why I believe in translation: for us to be able to live together.*

Nelson Mandela, as quoted in Antjie Krog's *A change of tongue*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Prior to 1994 the only official languages in local government – particularly in the areas that now form part of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality – were English and Afrikaans. The new dispensation that came about in 1994 gave recognition to nine other languages as official languages of South Africa (ie Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu). In addition to this, through the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000), community participation came to be a requirement in local government.

Given the foregoing, the City of Tshwane decided to provide language facilitation services and to craft its own policy on how to accommodate and promote multilingualism. Its Language Policy is thus aimed at assisting the City to achieve optimal community participation by enabling Tshwane's residents to communicate and access municipal services irrespective of language. It is also aimed at providing guidelines on how the Municipality should implement multilingualism in its communication to ensure that all residents have access to information and municipal services in the language that they understand best.

The Language Policy further takes its cue from section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, as well as the National Language Policy Framework that was adopted by Cabinet on 12 February 2003, which both state that local government will take into account the language preferences of citizens.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

In this policy, unless the context indicates otherwise –

**"Constitution"** means the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;

**"Council"** means the Council of the Municipality;

**"equitable use"** means the use of language which is fair, impartial and does not discriminate;

**"functional multilingualism"** means a choice of a particular language(s) in a particular situation, determined by the context in which language is to be used (ie the function, the audience and the message for which it is to be used);

**"interpreter"** means a person who translates the meaning of an utterance from one language, including sign language, orally into another language, and if the translation is into sign language, by means of manual communication and body language; **"interpreting"** and **"interpret"** have corresponding meanings;

**"language of record"** means an official language chosen for keeping records or archiving proceedings and procedures of the Municipality;

**"language rights"** means the rights citizens have in terms of the law to make language choices in particular circumstances;

**"liaison interpreting"** means relaying what is spoken after a short speech or consecutively (sentence-by-sentence), and occurs in situations where –

- (a) an employee of the Municipality does not understand the language of another employee or other employees of the Municipality (up to ten employees may be involved), eg in labour disputes or at disciplinary hearings; or
- (b) an employee of the Municipality does not understand the language of a client of the Municipality or a resident of Tshwane (up to ten clients or residents may be involved), eg in discussions between clinic staff and patients, between cashiers and clients at pay points, or between officials and the community at community information forums;

**"multilingualism"** means the use of three or more languages by an individual or a group of people;

**"Municipality"** means the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality established by the Gauteng Provincial Notice 6770 of 1 October 2000;

**"official language"** means a language used in government, education, business and the media;

**"PanSALB"** means the Pan South African Language Board, established by the Pan South African Language Board Act, 1995 (Act 59 of 1995);

**"terminology"** means standardised terms established for a specific subject field;

**"translation"** means the communication of the meaning of written language into an equivalent meaning in another language; **"translating"** and **"translate"** have corresponding meanings;

**"working language"** means an official language chosen by the Municipality as the language most practicable for use during a particular communication event.

### 3. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The following constitutes the legal framework for this policy:

- 3.1 Section 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.
- 3.2 Section 9(3) of the Constitution: The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, **language** and birth.
- 3.3 Section 1.2.4 of the National Language Policy Framework of 2003: Local government must determine the language use and preferences of its communities within an enabling provincial language policy framework. Upon determination of the language use and preference of communities, local

government must, in broad consultation with its communities, develop, publicise and implement a multilingual policy.

- 3.4 Section 3 of the Language Policy Framework of the Gauteng Provincial Government (August 2005) sets as one of its objectives to support, develop and sustain multilingualism within provincial and local government departments and in their communication and interaction with the public.
- 3.5 The Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act 2 of 2000).
- 3.6 The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele White Paper, 1997).

#### **4. OBJECTIVES**

This policy is in line with the constitutional provisions on multilingualism, and the key performance indicators of the Municipality. The policy aims to ensure –

- 4.1 the translation of the language rights enshrined in the Constitution into a coherent and effective approach to multilingualism in the Municipality;
- 4.2 the promotion of the equitable use of the official languages of the Municipality;
- 4.3 the facilitation of equitable access to municipal services and information;
- 4.4 the redress of the linguistic inequalities of the past which resulted in the underdevelopment of the African languages;
- 4.5 the protection of language diversity and the promotion of respect for multilingualism and unity in diversity; and
- 4.6 the use of multilingualism for effective administration and communication in the Municipality.

#### **5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The policy is based on the following principles:

##### *5.1 Language rights*

To promote respect for the language rights of residents as enshrined in the Constitution.

##### *5.2 Language equity*

To ensure the equal treatment of the official languages of the Municipality.

### 5.3 *Redress*

To enhance the status and roles of previously marginalised languages.

### 5.4 *Non-discrimination*

To prevent the use of language for the purposes of exploitation, domination and discrimination.

### 5.5 *People-centredness*

To address the needs, aspirations and interests of language communities in the spirit of Batho Pele.

### 5.6 *Partnerships*

To collaborate with public and private language institutions and agencies to promote multilingualism.

### 5.7 *Good governance*

To use all the official languages of the Municipality to ensure transparent, accountable local government which is responsive to the linguistic needs of its constituency.

### 5.8 *Participation*

To enable municipal employees and the residents of Tshwane to participate in decision-making processes.

## 6. **SCOPE OF APPLICATION**

This policy applies to employees of the Municipality and residents of Tshwane and to any party that may require the provision of language services from the Municipality.

## 7. **LINGUISTIC PROFILE OF TSHWANE**

To determine the official languages of the Municipality, Census 2001 figures and reports on external and internal surveys were used.

### 7.1 **Census figures**

The following table, which is taken from Census 2001, gives an indication of the spread of home languages in Tshwane.

<b>Language</b>	<b>Number of speakers as a percentage</b>
Sepedi	22,14
Afrikaans	21,29

Setswana	17,11
Xitsonga	9,99
isiZulu	7,61
English	6,54
isiNdebele	4,94
Sesotho	3,95
isiXhosa	1,91
siSwati	1,91
Tshivenda	1,77
Other	0,83
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

Census 2001 by municipality: Report of the Census Sub-Committee to the South African Statistics Council on Census 2001 (reproduced at <http://www.statssa.gov.za>)

The home language profile of Tshwane indicates that the most widely used home language is Sepedi, followed by Afrikaans, Setswana, Xitsonga, isiZulu, and English. It is clear that there is no single dominant home language in Tshwane, but a multilingual situation in which these six languages account for 84, 68% of the population.

## 7.2 Internal and external language surveys and audits

In drafting the Language Policy, the language usage, needs and preferences of the public of Gauteng were also considered. The Gauteng information was obtained from the results of a 2004 provincial language and communication audit captured in *Towards a Functional and Cost-effective Language Policy for Gauteng*. The audit was conducted by Sarah Slabbert Associates for the Gauteng Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation. The audit showed that most officials at service delivery points are able to communicate with the public in more languages than just English and Afrikaans. The audit also showed that most clients or members of the public prefer to use indigenous languages to access government services. According to the audit, the language preferences in one of the provincial hospitals were as follows:

- African languages: 58,5%
- English: 36,8%
- Afrikaans: 7,9%

The audit findings highlight a significant need for translation and interpreting services to ensure that clients are served in their home languages.

## 8. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made regarding language usage in the Municipality:

### 8.1 Official languages of Tshwane

Taking into account the Census 2001 figures on home language usage, the preferences of Tshwane residents and the options proposed in the draft Language Policy of the Gauteng Provincial Government (30 April 2004), the Municipality adopts and approves the following **eight languages** as official languages:

- Afrikaans;
- English;
- Sepedi;
- Xitsonga;
- Setswana;
- isiZulu;
- isiNdebele; and
- Tshivenda

The Municipality must also make every effort to use the other official languages of the Republic of South Africa, including South African Sign Language, on request. The Municipality must furthermore provide Braille documents for specific communication events where practicable.

It should, however, be noted that the Municipality's official languages will be reviewed based on the results of future Tshwane-wide language and communication audits or surveys.

## **8.2 Internal spoken communication**

8.2.1 Any of the official languages of the Municipality may be used in spoken intradepartmental and interdepartmental communication, provided that all involved in the communication event understand the language(s) being spoken.

8.2.2 English is recommended as the working language in spoken intradepartmental and interdepartmental communication. Another official language of the Municipality may be used, provided that it is understood by all parties involved in the communication event.

8.2.3 Any of the official languages of the Municipality may be used in any debates or proceedings of the Council. The Municipality must therefore provide for simultaneous interpreting from and into the official languages of the Municipality.

8.2.4 In general, disciplinary hearings, job interviews and performance assessments in the Municipality will be conducted in English, provided that translation and interpreting services are made available for those who cannot speak or understand English.

## **8.3 External spoken communication**

8.3.1 The Municipality must, in its spoken communication, strive to serve all its clients in the language(s) of their choice.

8.3.2 If staff members are not available at a customer care centre, pay point, clinic or other public venue of the Municipality to assist clients orally in their language of choice, liaison interpreters must be used to assist them. Where necessary, every effort must be made to utilise interpreting services (consecutive, simultaneous, telephone and whispered) where practicable.

8.3.3 The Municipality must provide liaison interpreters if important or strategic information is to be conveyed orally to groups of multilingual residents at public events organised by the Municipality (eg indabas or imbizos of the Health and Social Development Department).

#### **8.4 Internal written communication**

8.4.1 To promote operational efficiency, English will be the working language of the Municipality, and translations into the other official languages of the Municipality will be made available on request.

8.4.2 The Municipality will provide translation services on request for intradepartmental and interdepartmental written communication.

8.4.3 Services will be made available on request for the translation of motions presented at Council meetings into any of the other official languages of the Municipality.

8.4.4 The Municipality's policies, procedures, conditions of service, strategic circulars, important human resource information, health and safety information and other strategic documents must be made available in all the official languages of the Municipality.

8.4.5 The Municipality must provide multilingual liaison interpreters from among its own staff to assist illiterate staff in gaining access to municipal information. Liaison interpreting should be seen as a mechanism to support written communication.

8.4.6 Although no employee of the Municipality may be prevented from using an official language of his or her choice at any given time, all municipal documents that need to be archived must, for practical administrative reasons, be available in the original language and English as the language of record.

8.4.7 The use of plain language in internal municipal documents must be encouraged to facilitate understanding and improve communication.

#### **8.5 External written communication**

8.5.1 All official notices, statements, tariffs, by-laws, regulations, policies, advertisements, etc issued or published by the Municipality for public consumption must be made available in all the official languages of the Municipality, where practicable and financially viable.

8.5.2 The Municipality must provide multilingual liaison interpreters from among its own staff as a mechanism to supplement written communication and assist illiterate clients in gaining access to municipal services and information. The liaison interpreters must be used for liaison interpreting at customer care centres, pay points, clinics or other public venues of the Municipality if multilingual staff members are not available for this purpose.

8.5.3 The Municipality must make every effort to promote multilingualism on its website and in its external publications by using all the official languages of the Municipality.

- 8.5.4 All external correspondence of the Municipality must be translated into the official language in which the original communication was received, provided that an English translation of the document is archived for municipal record purposes and possible legal proceedings. The Municipality must inform the client that the English text will be used in the legal proceedings.
- 8.5.5 All external documents of the Municipality (and especially letters) must carry a sentence at the foot of the page stating that the document can be made available in any of the official languages of South Africa, and the corporate identity manual of the Municipality must stipulate this as a requirement.
- 8.5.6 All municipal documents that need to be archived must, for practical administrative reasons, be available in English as the language of record.
- 8.5.7 English must be used by the Municipality for international communication, but the Municipality must make translation services available for ad hoc communication in the preferred language of the country concerned.
- 8.5.8 The use of plain language in external municipal documents must be encouraged to facilitate understanding and improve communication.

## **8.6 Municipal signage**

The Municipality must give due consideration to the language preferences of local communities when erecting local road signs and direction signs. All identification signage, direction signs and road signs relating to municipal buildings, services, facilities, infrastructure and vehicles must be in at least three official languages of the Municipality where practicable. Where this is not practicable due to financial constraints, at least two languages (English and another official language of the Municipality) may be adopted, provided that English is the one language and the other is the dominant language of the area concerned.

## **8.7 People with language disabilities**

The Municipality must, on request and where practicable, provide for the needs of people with language disabilities.

## **8.8 Training at the Municipality**

- 8.8.1 The medium of instruction for municipal training will be English, provided that the principle of functional multilingualism is applied where practicable. A presenter may, for instance, use any of the Municipality's other official languages, depending on the language usage and preferences of the students. In all circumstances, consideration must be given to the desired outcome (ie effective training).
- 8.8.2 The oral component of any municipal programme or campaign directed at improving the well-being of employees must be conducted in all the official languages of the Municipality, eg videos for the internal information channel.

- 8.8.3 To serve the public effectively, employees of the Municipality must be encouraged to learn, in an organised manner, the official languages of the Municipality that they do not know, as well as South African Sign Language.
- 8.8.4 The Municipality must organise training programmes and refresher courses for its employees to assist in the development of their skills in using the official languages of the Municipality, so that they can render an effective and efficient service to communities.
- 8.8.5 Services must be made available to translate internal training and course material into any official language of the Municipality at the request of trainees.
- 8.8.6 To improve access to training and to improve communication between trainees and trainers, trainers and course designers must be encouraged to use plain language in their training manuals.

## **9. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

This policy will be phased in, so as to have enough time to build financial and human capacity for successful full-scale implementation. A phased-in approach will also make room for evaluating and monitoring the application of the policy. This will help to ensure that the policy is reviewed regularly and that corrective measures are taken at set intervals.

The following strategies will be employed to ensure the successful implementation of this policy:

- 9.1 Providing interpreting services at council meetings, disciplinary hearings, municipal courts, IDP consultations, public participation meetings, City or Tshwane conferences, mayoral imbizos and other relevant forums;
- 9.2 Facilitating communication in the different languages at customer care points and call centres;
- 9.3 Translating information documents into the official languages of the Municipality;
- 9.4 Creating terminology that will help develop the official languages of the Municipality, especially the six official African languages;
- 9.5 Editing Mayoral Committee and Council reports to ensure appropriate language use in these documents;
- 9.6 Offering training in all official languages of the Municipality to employees who require this for effective service delivery to different language communities;
- 9.7 Ensuring that municipal signage appears in at least three official languages;
- 9.8 Facilitating language awareness campaigns;

- 9.9 Developing a strategy to promote reading and writing in the indigenous languages (African languages, including Afrikaans);
- 9.10 Ensuring that the City of Tshwane website, as a public tool, reflects multilingualism; and
- 9.11 Conducting regular language audits/surveys.

## **10. CAPACITY BUILDING**

- 10.1 The implementation of this policy will result in an increase in the demand for translation, editing, terminology development and interpreting services in the six official African languages of the Municipality. The increased demand will result in the need for further training in language skills.
- 10.2 In an effort to build capacity for municipal language services, the Municipality must, in accordance with its bursary policy, offer bursaries to students to study one or more of the official languages of the Municipality at tertiary level.
- 10.3 To give effect to functional multilingualism, the Municipality must provide liaison interpreters, and must provide training opportunities for departmental liaison interpreters (eg short courses in liaison interpreting).

## **11. LANGUAGE STRUCTURES**

This policy will be implemented jointly by the Language Services Unit and other language stakeholders. Their envisaged roles are the following:

### **11.1 Language Services Unit**

To ensure the successful implementation of this policy, the Language Services Unit will –

- facilitate and coordinate the implementation of this policy by providing translation, editing, interpreting, language training and terminology development services;
- conduct regular language surveys and audits to assess the appropriateness of the existing policy and practices of the Municipality and make recommendations for their improvement;
- raise awareness of the policy to ensure compliance;
- report to the relevant language control bodies (ie the National Language Forum and PanSALB) on progress with the implementation of the policy, when requested;
- raise awareness among municipal employees and residents about their language rights; and

- facilitate all activities listed in section 9 of this policy.

## **11.2 Other language stakeholders**

Language structures that will collaborate with the Language Services Unit in the implementation of the policy are the Department of Arts and Culture, the Gauteng Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, PanSALB, and institutions of higher learning. Though differing, the role(s) that will be played by these institutions may include –

- monitoring the use of the official languages of the Municipality in all municipal departments;
- monitoring the implementation of the policy;
- initiating and sustaining a vibrant discourse on multilingualism in all communities; and
- initiating studies and research on –
  - the development of the official languages of the Municipality;
  - the attitude of municipal employees and Tshwane residents towards multilingualism;
  - the acquisition and use of the official languages in the Municipality;
  - the promotion of multilingualism in Tshwane; and
  - the optimisation of the use of the language resources of the Municipality.

## **12. POLICY REVIEW**

12.1 The Municipality must conduct regular internal and external language preference and proficiency audits to determine the linguistic needs and linguistic capabilities of municipal officials and Tshwane residents.

12.2 The Language Services Unit must use the results of these audits to revise and update the policy.

12.3 The Language Services Unit must regularly assess the implementation of the policy and effect the required changes.