

PRINCE ALBERT LANGUAGE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides for eleven official languages and recognizes the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of the people of South Africa (Sec 6).
- 1.2 It provides further that everyone has a right to use their language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice (Sec 30).
- 1.3 Municipalities are enjoined by the Constitution and the Municipal Systems Act to take into account the language usage and preferences of their residents when communicating, including the special needs of people who cannot read or write.
- 1.4 The National Language Policy Framework provides that upon determination of the language use and preference of communities, local government, in broad consultation with their communities, develop, publicize and implement a multilingual policy.
- 1.5 According to the results of the last census the languages spoken in the Western Cape are, in order of predominance, Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. Prince Albert Municipality seems to reflect the same profile.
- 1.6 It is in this spirit that the Prince Albert Municipality compiled this Language Policy.

2. AIMS

The aims of this policy include the following:

- 2.1 To promote the equitable use of the two main official languages spoken in Prince Albert, namely Afrikaans and English.
- 2.2 To facilitate access to government services, knowledge and information.
- 2.3 To ensure redress of the imbalances of the past in the use of languages.
- 2.4 To encourage and support citizens to learn official languages other than their own which will assist in achieving and sustaining national unity and cultural diversity
- 2.5 To ensure equitable use of working languages by promoting good language management.
- 2.6 To implement and give effect to the provisions of Section 6 of the Constitution as well as the Batho Pele Principles and related service charters.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy include the following:

- 3.1 To determine the working languages for Prince Albert Municipality, that is languages used in official communication.
- 3.2 To give due preference to the working languages for the Municipality.
- 3.3 To remove all language barriers, thereby promoting equal access to municipal programmes and services.
- 3.4 To ensure that no person is denied or prevented from using their language of choice regardless of whether or not it is one of the working languages.
- 3.5 To give Afrikaans and English equal status and treatment as the working languages of Prince Albert Municipality.

4. SCOPE

The provisions of this policy shall apply to all organs of the Municipality, including entities.

5. PROVISIONS FOR THE USE OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

5.1 MEETINGS

- 5.1.1 Any of the two working languages of the Municipality may be used in any debates and other proceedings of the Council and its Committees.
- 5.1.2 During the sittings of the Council and its Committees there should be provision for interpreting services into either of the working languages. In the event of any member wishing to have the proceedings interpreted into a language other than the working languages, such member must give adequate notice of the need for interpretation to the chairperson of Council or relevant Committee.
- 5.1.3 Sign language must be pre-arranged on request.
- 5.1.4 Meetings or hearings with the public and or any public participation event must be conducted in either of the two working languages depending on the language preference of that audience. Should there be members of the audience who do not understand the preferred language; interpretation must be provided via pre-arrangement.

5.2 POLICIES AND BY-LAWS

Policies, by-laws and resolutions of the Council and its Committees must be written in both working languages of the Municipality, subject to financial constraints.

5.3 NOTICES AND ADVERTISEMENTS

All official notices and advertisements issued for general public information must be published in Afrikaans and English.

5.4 CORRESPONDENCE

- 5.4.1 Afrikaans or English may be used for purposes of internal written communication. If the addressee does not understand the language used, she/he may request that communication with her/him takes place in a language that she/he understands.
- 5.4.2 Circulars must be issued in both working languages.
- 5.4.3 Internal oral communication can be in Afrikaans, English or isiXhosa depending on the individuals that are conversing.
- 5.4.4 External communication must be in either of the working languages, taking into account the language preference of the recipient. Response to external communication must match the language of the original communication.
- 5.4.5 Outgoing correspondence must carry an indication that should the recipient require the correspondence in a working language other than the one in which it is written, such will be provided on request.
- 5.4.6 Citizens have a right to communicate in the language of their choice.

5.5 IDENTIFICATION SIGNS

Identification signs of and directions to municipal offices or facilities must be in the official languages of the Western Cape.

5.6. CUSTOMER CARE

All customers must be served in their preferred language, with the assistance of interpreters, where necessary and in recognition of the available resources of the Municipality.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 STRATEGIES

- 6.1.1 The Municipality must ensure that both councilors and staff are sensitized to the value of multilingualism and encouraged to accommodate the language use and preference of residents/clients, other councillors and officials.
- 6.1.2 The Municipality must actively encourage and support the development of the language skills of both staff members and councillors.
- 6.1.3 When recruiting new staff the Municipality must take cognizance of this language policy.

6.2 TIMEFRAMES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

6.2.1 Unless otherwise stated in this policy or by a Council resolution, provisions of this policy will come into effect upon adoption by Council.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The various divisions of the Prince Albert Municipality must make budgetary provision for the implementation of the language policy, e.g. development of language skills of staff & councillors, investing in translation & interpreting infrastructure, etc.