COMMUNICATION POLICY

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COMMUNICATION POLICY - OVERBERG DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

1. SCOPE

The scope of this policy includes all individuals who are involved in or partnered with the Overberg District Municipality (ODM), including:

Employer and employees: This policy applies to the ODM as the employer and the employees of ODM and sets the expectations for their role in communication within the organisation and with external partners.

Partners: This policy applies to all individuals or organisations that partner with the ODM, and it sets expectations for their communication about the ODM and its employees.

1.1. Policy Statement

Overberg District Municipality (ODM) is committed to two-way communication, building and nurturing relationships with its internal and external audiences. The municipality has to form partnerships and nurture its relationship with all spheres of government, public sector institutions and the private sector. Communication is an essential strategic service – to ensure that information is widely accessible within the public space, engage citizens in the conversation around critical issues, and empower citizens to shape government policies and take up opportunities that affect their lives.[1]

The purpose of this Communication Policy is to regulate ODM's communication with all stakeholders and to ensure that communication is well-coordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of personnel and the public of the Overberg and whoever has to be informed about what the municipality does. The policy also seeks to ensure that all municipal information is communicated in a coordinated and coherent manner, accurate, timeous, understandable, and catering to the district's cultural diversity. Listed in this policy are the responsibilities of all officials who play a role in communicating about the institution.

This policy is informed by the national communication policy approved by Cabinet on 22 August 2018.[2] The national communication policy is currently under review.

Any media communication emanating from government employees in their private capacity (blogs, social media posts, letters to the editor) must subscribe to the Public Service Act (Act 103 of 1994) and the Code of Conduct for Public Servants. Information acquired while on duty must not be used when voicing personal opinions, and inappropriate media engagement is prohibited.[3]

1.2. Purpose

The Communication Policy strives to ensure that Overberg District Municipality acknowledges the importance of communication as a strategic management function and an integral part of its daily functioning.

This policy sets the expectations and manages the flow of communications within and outside the ODM. It also facilitates meaningful and necessary communication for employee productivity and morale without restricting communication.

The Municipality acknowledges that it has a responsibility to inform its internal and external stakeholders of issues identified, progress, and results achieved in addressing its mandate.

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[1] Department of Communications, Communication Policy. Approved by Cabinet (22 August 2018), p. 7

[2] Department of Communications, Communication Policy. Approved by Cabinet (22 August 2018), p.20

[3] Department of Communications, Communication Policy. Approved by Cabinet (22 August 2018), p.27

2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Communication Policy is in line with the following:

- the Code of Conduct for Municipal Employees;
- the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996);
- Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002;
- Local Government: Municipal Structures Amendment Act 3 of 2021;
- Section 75 of the Local Government: Municipal Financial Management Act 56 of 2003 which requires that municipalities place key documents and information on their websites, including their Integrated Development Plan (IDP), annual budget, adjustments budgets and budget-related documents and policies.
- Regulation 30 of the Municipal Financial Management Act and the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations published in Government Gazette 32141, General Notice, on 17 April 2009.
- Sections 21(a) and 21 (b) of the Municipal Systems Act, no. 32 of 2000, also oblige municipalities to convey specific documents and information to the public, displaying these files on the municipality's official website;
- Electronic Communications and Transactions Act 25 of 2002;
- Films and Publications Amendment Act 11 of 2019;
- Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, 2005;
- Department of Government Communication and Information System Policy, 2018;
- ODM Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy;
- ODM Information and Security Policy;
- ODM Language Policy;
- Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000;
- Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000, Act 3 of 2000;
- Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013;
- ODM Records and Archives Policy;
- Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act 12 of 2012); and
- Western Cape Road Infrastructure Act & Regulations.

3. OBJECTIVES & PRINCIPLES

3.1. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

a) Contribute to the ODM's achievement of its institutional vision and strategic objectives;
b) establish and entrench a strategic, integrated and measurable institutional communication approach that is aligned with institutional strategies and messages;
c) operationalise a quality-control framework for communication that defines institutional communication processes, as well as communication roles and responsibilities;
d) promote the implementation of effective and integrated institutional communication best practices across the institution;
e) align institutional communication with ODM's brand positioning and institutional brand identity guidelines;
f) facilitate best practice and govern the utilisation of digital communication channels (websites), including social networking platforms, for interactive and inclusive engagement with stakeholders;
g) facilitate integrated institutional communication to optimise ODM's issues management approach and processes;
h) cultivate a values-based and consultative approach to communication, including participation in debate and commentary on internal and public platforms; and
i) enable the integration of institutional communication with marketing initiatives and marketing communication.

These objectives are informed by the district's core values of:

➢ Caring (Ubuntu);
➢ Integrity;
➢ Commitment;
➢ Transformation;
➢ Transparency;
➢ Excellence;
➢ Honesty; and
➢ Respect.

3.2. Principles

The Communication Policy is based on the following principles which guide the interpretation and implementation of this Policy:

a) The Communication Policy is underpinned by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, specifically the rights to privacy; freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and other media, academic freedom, freedom of scientific research and artistic creativity; and the freedom to receive or impart information or ideas. These freedoms are accompanied by concomitant responsibilities and limitations [Subsection 16 (2) of the Bill of Rights].
b) The governance and oversight of institutional communication is the primary responsibility of the owner and curator of the Communication Policy and is predominantly implemented by the IDP & Communications Department.
c) Institutional communication is subject to this policy and it is a shared responsibility which is undertaken by a broad range of departments, sections and divisions across the institution. Other forms of communication undertaken at/by the ODM are guided by this policy.
d) All institutional communication must be timeous, transparent, credible, accurate and relevant, and be distributed through the appropriate channels.
e) Institutional communication must be responsive to the needs of the ODM's internal and external stakeholders and should promote effective stakeholder engagement, trust and beneficial relationships.
f) Institutional communication is aligned with ODM's Communication Strategy.
g) Institutional communication is always guided by ODM's institutional values.
h) Institutional communication must be context appropriate; sensitive to people who are differently abled; cognisant of racial, gender and cultural diversity; promote equity and fairness, and is further guided by human resources policies of the institution.
i) ODM values and promotes critical thinking, and respectful, open debate, as well as specialist commentary in their respective fields of expertise by employees in the public domain. ODM furthermore supports and encourages responsible communication activities inherent in Local Government, guided by the relevant ODM policies, protocols, codes and guidelines.

4. AUDIENCE

The ODM audiences include:

➢ businesses;
➢ community-based organisations;
➢ international audiences;
➢ investors;
➢ local and regional community members;
➢ Local Government representatives;
➢ media representatives (print, broadcast, electronic);
➢ municipal employees;
➢ National Government representatives;
➢ Non-Government Organisations;

- ➢ Provincial Government representatives;
- ➢ special and vulnerable groups (youth, women, people with disabilities and the elderly); and
- ➢ tourists.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING

To evaluate and address the needs, manage expectations and anticipate issues that may arise, the IDP & Communications Department, working with other departments, should routinely monitor and analyse the communications environment. A communication representative should attend IDP and community engagements. Communicators can source feedback from the public in this way.

Other sources used to obtain feedback and opinions from the public include:

a) broadcast media;
b) conferences, forums, indabas and other events;
c) informal discussions with internal and external stakeholders;
d) social media mentions;
e) portfolio committee meetings, council and other committees; and
f) scanning of news media channels.

6. MESSENGERS

In order to ensure effective communication and compliance with the Overberg District Municipality Communication Policy, the following roles and responsibilities are adopted:

6.1. Executive Mayor

The Executive Mayor is the chief political spokesperson for the municipality. He/she may delegate these responsibilities to any official of choice whenever required. The Executive Mayor is accountable to all councillors.

He/she is also responsible for communicating annual communication priorities, objectives, and requirements in the IDP. As far as communicating on matters of a political nature is concerned, the chief political communicator (i.e. Executive Mayor) will be assisted by the IDP & Communications Department and the public participation units to get municipal-related (non-political) messages delivered to the public and the media when required.

6.2. Speaker

The Speaker ensures that order is maintained during council meetings and that compliance in the council and council committees occurs. All conduct should be in line with the Code of Conduct for Councillors as set out in schedule 1 of the Municipal Systems Act. The Speaker should encourage the participation of communities and community organisations in the municipality's decision-making process.

He/she should develop mechanisms to ensure that public participation is monitored. It is also his/her duty to ensure that communities and community organisations are educated on their rights and responsibilities to participate and give input to the municipality's policy development processes, planning and budget processes.

6.3. Council and Councillors

Council's role is to ensure '...the peace, order and good governance...' of its municipalities. Council's focus should be high level/strategic and policy orientated rather than operational. The Council sets the overall directions and goals for the municipality and monitors the implementation and success.

Councillors represent ratepayers and residents; secondary messengers communicate to the public. Councillors also facilitate community participation in municipal decision-making.

6.4. Municipal Manager

The Municipal Manager (MM) is the spokesperson for the municipality on strategic and operational issues. He/she decides who is allowed to speak to the media about the municipality and on behalf of the municipality. The MM promotes a positive culture of good governance in the Council and administration. In cases where the media raise controversial issues, the MM is notified. If needed, he/she will respond via the IDP & Communications Department or directly to the press.

6.5. Directors & Managers

Queries from journalists will be referred to Directors / Managers for comment / clarification / information. Each Director / Manager must approve all content produced or communicated by their teams to the IDP & Communications Department.

6.6. IDP & Communications Manager

The IDP & Communications Manager oversees the department's communication efforts and ensures that the ODM conforms to the requirements of this policy. The manager must also ensure that the department reaches its communication objectives.

6.7. IDP & Communications Officer

The Communications Officer (CO) develops and implements communication initiatives to advance the institution's goals with his/her team. When required, the institution may request the CO to coordinate joint communications initiatives. These are supported by solid relationships with the media, key stakeholders, including local municipalities, Provincial and National Governments, and private the private sector.

6.8. IDP & Communications Department

The IDP & Communications Department is responsible for executing all communication activities of the municipality, which include communicating educational materials, public relations, advertising and marketing. The Department also manages the CI, runs the municipal website, and may assist with planning of events.

The Department carries out all duties associated with the communications function; they advocate for those who will or should receive information and ensure clarity and utility of information for the end-user. They work collaboratively with other employees to provide communications support and advice.

7. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

7.1. Internal Communication

The primary purpose of internal communication is to facilitate and manage the flow of information within the Municipality in order to generate an informed workforce. Internal communication includes formal and informal communication.

The following communication tools and mediums must be used to communicate with staff members:

- Telephones (landlines)
- Cellular Phones
- Emails
- Corporate and Strategic Documents
- Municipal Intranet
- Social Media
- Websites
- Newsletters
- Posters & Notices
- Notice boards
- Staff/Departmental Meetings
- Workshops & Training
- Weekly Schedules & Programmes
- Payslip

7.2. External Communication

The primary purpose of external communication is to inform stakeholders of the Municipality's services, programmes and to build relations. Information should always be presented in an understandable format and not over-complicated.

The following communication tools and mediums must be used to communicate with stakeholders:

- Social Media
- Websites
- Newsletters
- Telephones (landlines)
- Cellular Phones
- Emails
- Posters & Notices
- Booklets & Pamphlets
- Corporate and Strategic Documents
- Notice boards
- Newspapers
- Radio
- Television
- Exhibitions & Awareness Sessions
- Public Meetings
- Workshops & Training

All external communication campaigns must be approved by the Municipal Manager.

7.3. Overberg District Public Participation & Communications Forum

The District Public Participation & Communications Forum, chaired by the Manager: IDP & Communications, is the official platform where public participation and communication officials from all three spheres of government and other sectors, discuss essential matters, share information and discuss technical issues. Members of the forum include:

- Overberg District Municipality (As Chair);
- Local Municipal Communicators;
- Local Municipal Public Participation Officials;
- WCG Departments; and
- Government Communication and Information System (GCIS);

Other Sector Departments are invited based on current programmes or projects rolled out which affects the municipalities and/or the region or requires input from the municipalities.

8. THE COMMUNICATION FUNCTION

The function is expected to adapt to the framework set out by the Department of Communication's National Communication Policy. It is stated in the document that local government should adjust to national policy to suit their immediate communication environment. This counts for all three government spheres (national, provincial and local), including government agencies and entities.[4]

The IDP & Communications Department mainly works with four types of communication:

- developmental/educational
- public relations
- advertising
- marketing

All of the above functions are executed by using print, online or broadcast media platforms. Production of the entire Municipality's communication material must be approved by the Municipal Manager after prior consultation with the Communication Officer.

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[4] Department of Communications, Communication Policy. Approved by Cabinet (22 August 2018), p.10

8.1. Developmental/Educational Communication

Development communication refers to communication to facilitate social and economic change. Citizens should be able to participate in communication activities that directly impact their lives actively. The approach must be educational and not instructional.

8.2. Public Relations

Public Relations processes serve to persuade the public, media, investors, partners, employees and other stakeholders. Through content creation, a communicator can influence public perceptions and clarify the municipality's position on a specific matter.

The Communication Officer must coordinate all media relations. The following procedures apply to media liaison:

➢ All media enquiries must be referred to the Communication Officer, who then engages with the relevant line functionaries for an adequate response.
➢ The official who is requested to provide information to the Communication Officer must ensure that the answers are verified and approved by his/her executive manager.
➢ During a disaster declaration or emergency, media queries will be managed in the most time-efficient manner. The Incident Commander (IC) might choose to speak directly to the media if he/she wishes to, but communicators have to be informed of such a decision.
➢ All media enquiries must be treated as top priority and attended to within the stipulated deadline or within 24 hours, whichever the case may be.
➢ Both media enquiries and responses must be in writing, except for radio and television interviews.

Category 1	Category 2
➢ Audit outcome reports ➢ By-laws ➢ Environmental pollution (disaster level – long-term), health epidemics ➢ Financial matters ➢ Job creation (EPWP, HR) ➢ Legal matters ➢ Performance Management ➢ Policy issues ➢ Regional Landfill facility ➢ Service delivery performance ➢ Theft (council property)	➢ Air quality ➢ Environmental pollution (quick fixes) ➢ Human Settlements ➢ Intergovernmental relations ➢ Municipal health (quick fixes) ➢ Veld and mountain fires which have not affected infrastructure ➢ Plans & Strategies ➢ Servicing of roads ➢ SMME development ➢ Tourism ➢ Waste Management
Category 3	
➢ Environmental pollution (disaster level – long-term) ➢ Emergency communication (natural disasters, pandemics, national/provincial/local state of disasters, etc.) ➢ Loss of life because of negligence / Local, provincial and national state of disasters ➢ Air Quality incidents	
Category 4	
➢ All political matters	

Category 1: All topics listed under category one (1) must be communicated to the following internal role players for a response:

➢ Municipal Manager or Strategic Manager;
➢ any Director whose directorate might be affected by the issue
➢ any Manager whose department might be directly affected by the issue
➢ an official from the Legal Services unit;
➢ Communication Officer; and
➢ any other manager/supervisor whose knowledge and insight is required.

Category 2: All topics under category two (2) can be communicated only to the relevant Director and Manager(s) in his/her directorate. Final approval will be done by the CO in collaboration with the applicable Director.

Category 3: All topics under category three (3) can be approved by the Manager: Emergency Services or the Manager: Municipal Health Services or the Manager: Environmental Management (or a delegated official), depending on the scale of the incident. However, the Communication Officer needs to be informed of the media queries and responses to these.

Category 4: All queries of a political nature will be dealt with by the Executive Mayor. All media responses by the political office bearers must include the following members:

➢ mayor@odm.org.za (Executive Mayor);
➢ mm@odm.orgv.za (Municipal Manager);
➢ info@odm.org.za (Records and Archives);
➢ communications@odm.org.za (Communications Officer); and
➢ if a portfolio chairperson is implicated, he/she should be included in the response.

Request for personal information: Refer to PAIA manual.

Mayoral Committee Members

After the administration of the municipality has addressed a media query related to a function linked to the specific portfolio of a Mayoral Committee member, the final media response must be shared with the applicable Portfolio Chairperson to take note of.

8.2.1. Media releases and news articles

For the media to consider news from the municipality, it must include fresh content, which has a human interest and speaks to the district community.

At any point in time the CO can request for a draft media release from a Department about a certain topic. The feasibility and applicability of the topic or media release must first, however, be discussed with the relevant manager or director. If there is resistance to provide information, the Municipal Manager will be consulted for his/her inputs and final decision about the approval of the request.

The information contained in media releases must be verified by the Director of the Unit. Suppose the content includes any political office-bearer, in that case, the information must be verified by the Executive Mayor's office, or the Executive Mayor him/herself.

It is the media's prerogative to publish any media release distributed by the IDP & Communications Department.

If the media release is one-sided or biased against ODM, (even after the ODM has responded within the required timeframe), the CO must consider intervening through the correct channels to address the matter, such as lodging a complaint with the Press Ombudsman.

Any changes by the CO to an original statement by a technical expert of a field, must be clearly marked, using track changes in order for the initiator of the article to verify content and possible contexts changes.

8.2.2. Videos and photos

The Communication Officer (or a delegated official) of the ODM are responsible for photo and video footage of municipal events, which excludes any union meeting. It must be stressed that due to budget constraints, the district municipal communicator/s will utilise local municipal communicators to photograph events in their respective municipal areas, if possible.

All photos and videos of municipal events are approved before publishing by the CO.

8.3. Advertising

Advertising the municipality has to be aligned to the district's official branding. It involves broadcast (radio and television), print media and online media.

Publishing marketing-related adverts in print, online, and broadcast media is managed, coordinated and executed by the IDP & Communications Department. The advertising of notices, tenders and vacancies are managed and coordinated by initiating departments. The approval of official notices, vacancies and tenders must be done by the relevant Director.

8.3.1. Radio and television

If interviews are paid for by the municipality, questions must be drafted and approved prior to the interview. In the case of free publicity using a live interview, the topic and draft questions need to be requested by the IDP & Communications Department. However, it is within the prerogative of the media house to change questions during an interview if it was not paid for by the municipality.

All other radio and television adverts, including but not limited to live reads, news sponsorships, pre-recorded interviews, etc., must be vetted by the IDP & Communications Department.

8.3.2. Print-media

8.3.2.1. Billboards

Billboards serve the purpose of informing the public about important messages, especially disaster related. It is preferred that billboards are placed outside the road reserve. Local municipalities must ultimately approve billboard locations in their towns, but outside cities, the Western Cape Government, should be approached for advice because of the safety impact of signs, especially on proclaimed roads. B-municipalities also have by-laws that speak to roadside signage. More guidelines relating to the displaying of signage are explained by the Western Cape Road Infrastructure Act and Regulations.

8.3.2.2. Print publications

The Municipality makes use of various national, regional and local newspapers for the advertising of vacancies and important notices/messages.

➢ The Municipality makes use of a service provider for the requisition of quotes and the publishing of newspaper advertisements and notices.
➢ A template has been developed to be used for all newspaper advertising.
➢ The Municipal Manager and/or the Executive Mayor must approve all advertisements before publishing.
➢ The Communication Officer or a delegated official, with prior approval, may place advertisements in the various newspapers (or selected newspapers as required) through the use of the service provider.
➢ Guidelines in terms of newspaper advertising is captured in Directive 7: Communication – Printed Media.

When ODM's budget allows, advertising the municipality's service delivery achievements can be done in magazines, newspapers and publications.

Advertising of vacancies, notices and tenders should be done in accordance to the audience which it intends to reach.

8.3.2.3. Newsletters

Newsletter publications are developed by the IDP & Communications Department. These exist to inform, educate and influence internal and external audiences. Internal newsletters focus on employee-related issues, while external newsletters are aimed at both internal and external audiences.

The Manager: IDP & Communications approves the final newsletter publications.

8.3.2.4. Booklets, banners, flyers, posters, etc.

All other advertising collateral needs to be produced by the IDP & Communications Department in collaboration with user departments. Approval will be done by the relevant Director, Manager and CO.

8.4. Marketing

8.4.1. Website

The municipality's official website serves as the window to the public and is intended to provide the public with educational and informative content. The municipal website is also the portal for the public for accessing municipal opportunities, jobs, news and legislatively required documents.

Departments are responsible for ensuring that all documents are provided to the IDP & Communications Department according to legislative prescripts and deadlines. A Director or Manager can approve information that is placed on the Municipal website and social media. The Communication Officer or designated official must control the creation of links on the municipal website and the acceptance of a link from the municipal website to another website;

Website maintenance, security and development must be done in consultation with the Information Communication Technology department. Documents must be converted to PDF format before being uploaded to the corporate website.

8.4.2. Social Media

Social media platforms provide social media account owners with the opportunity to engage in two-way communication. However, these platforms pose various risks related to digital security, public perceptions, and reduced productivity at work if not properly monitored.

All social media accounts must be managed by the Communication Officer (or a delegated official). Only the CO (or a delegated official) may place or remove material on the Municipality's social media.

The municipality currently makes use of the following social media platforms:

➢ Facebook (Page and profile)
➢ Twitter (profile); and
➢ WhatsApp (multiple groups – refer to Annexure A: Social Media for the standard terms of reference for WhatsApp groups).

Please refer to Annexure A: Social Media Guidelines for Overberg District Municipality, for details of the organisation's social media activities and how it affects employees.

Every official that is employed by ODM, must conduct themselves, on their private social media platforms, in such a way that it does not bring ODM into disrepute.

Negative comments by the public on posts made of the ODM, may only be handled by the IDP & Communications Department, unless otherwise authorised by the CO. The CO must first consult with the applicable line manager for their input before responding to the negative comment. If the matter is of a highly controversial nature with political and major reputational damage, the EM and MM must be contacted to source their views on dealing with the issue. The CO will in some instances, request the relevant section head to respond directly to a post if it requires a highly technical response.

8.5. Branding

A clear and consistent Corporate Identity is required to assist the public in recognising, accessing and assessing the policies, programs, services and initiatives of the ODM. To maintain a recognisable and unified corporate identity throughout the Council, buildings, facilities, programs, services and activities must clearly be identifiable.

In identifying contributions or activities, the IDP & Communications Department must give prominence to the official symbols of the ODM in all information and communication materials, regardless of medium, for internal or external use.

These rules apply to the correct use and placement of the various branded goods used at events (gazebos, flags, banners, x-frames, etc.). All material developed by the ODM, flyers etc., should be proofed for the correct use of logos and language.

All corporate branded material must, at all times, be routed through the CO before being purchased. The CO will do quality checks on the identity and verify that what is planned to be purchased is in line with what the corporate brand guide of the municipality stipulates. When there are proposals for new branded materials, they will be captured and included in the next review of the corporate brand guide.

For more details about the municipality's branding collateral, refer to the CI Guidelines of ODM.

8.6. Events Coverage

Each department is responsible for informing the CO of any events that they wish to be covered in a timeous manner to ensure efficient scheduling and planning.

The following events may be requested for coverage:

➢ State of the District Address;
➢ Council meetings;
➢ Committee meetings (Section 79, 80, etc.);
➢ conferences, summits, forums, workshops, awareness/training/induction sessions, departmental meetings;
➢ meetings with internal and external stakeholders (excl. one-on-one meetings);
➢ visits from government/private stakeholders;
➢ site visits, open days, exhibitions;
➢ festival activities (only information on the role of the representatives must be provided, as the municipality, normally, does not host any festivals).

All requests for event coverage must be provided in detail and must contain dates, times, event names, event venues/locations, and a contact person.

In the case where the CO is unable to attend the event, then the CO may delegate the responsibility to another official who will be attending the event.

9. RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVES

External e-mails received from the public or organisations, sent to info@odm.org.za (Overberg District Municipality's official e-mail address), will be reviewed for applicability at the Registry. If indeed a record, it will be forwarded and incorporated into the system for record-keeping.

If individuals receive an official e-mail directly via e-mail, it must be forwarded to info@odm.org.za to be captured and distributed for attention by the appropriate staff.

Refer to the Records Management Policy for more information.

10. CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Crisis communication is implemented before, during and after a crisis. It serves the purpose of guiding those assigned to provide information to Communicators and those communicating to the public, media and other stakeholders.

Activities outlined in this document warrants that all communication resources have to be exercised in a short space of time to protect both the municipality and the public. The information has to be disseminated swiftly and effectively to minimise the risks related to the effects of a crisis.

Municipal Communicators are the voice of the municipality and, through their expertise and networks, can influence public perceptions and behaviour.

The goals of communication during a crisis are to:

a) offer information that might reduce the chances of speculation and inaccurate information being reported to the public;
b) always respond in a manner that will put the receiver at ease that the municipality is hard at work addressing pressing issues;
c) respond swiftly to provide the most appropriate messaging for the municipality;
d) influence public perceptions of how a crisis is being dealt with;
e) leverage on the media to reach a broad audience;
f) ensure that compassionate engagements with the public take place – the more, the better;
g) ensure that whoever speaks directly to the municipality, in writing or during interviews, are corrected whenever they speculate about issues;
h) ensure that there are reporting done on matters, positive and negative. This is extremely important because, in the case of negative issues, if the municipality does not respond to issues proactively, it could be seen that the municipality intentionally withheld information from the media or public to "protect" their reputation – admit mistakes;
i) ensure that the municipality stays on record with factual information.

Below is a breakdown of the leading role players in the communication of various emergencies. Do note that tasks can be delegated:

10.1. Disaster Management

Role Player	Communication role	Communication responsibilities
Executive Mayor	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live
Municipal Manager	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live
Manager: Municipal Disaster Management	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live
Communication (CO)	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live

10.2. Municipal Health

Role Player	Communication role	Communication responsibilities
Executive Mayor	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live
Municipal Manager	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live
Manager: Municipal Health	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live
Communication (CO)	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live

10.3. Environmental Management

Role Player	Communication role	Communication responsibilities
Executive Mayor	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live
Municipal Manager	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live
Manager: Environmental Management	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live
Communication (CO)	Spokesperson	Interviews with the media, pre-recorded or live

The ODM's Disaster Risk Management Plan can be accessed for more details regarding the roles and responsibilities of role players relating to disasters and emergencies.

11. LANGUAGE USE

The Constitution of South Africa provides that municipalities must consider the language usage and preference of a community. The three primary languages used in the Overberg District are isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans. Therefore, all important and/or mandated communication must be published in all three languages. More details on Council's language use can be viewed by accessing the "Language Policy" of Overberg District Municipality.

The target audience will determine the choice of language used in communications. All media queries received will be answered in the language it was received.

12. COPYRIGHT

The municipality owns all publicity material and information it has paid for or developed.

Consequently, the reproduction of any such material requires the approval of the IDP & Communications Department. Regulating the use of the Corporate Identity enables the municipality to prevent the misuse of the material by the producer or anyone else.

Subsequently, it is the responsibility of the communicators to ensure that content does not violate any copyright laws. When information is handed to the IDP & Communications Department for publication, it is the responsibility of the originator of the content to ensure that copyright laws are adhered to. Copyright relates to:

➢ Text (liable)
➢ Photographs
➢ Video Material and
➢ Sound clips and music.

13. MULTIMEDIA

Multimedia is produced internally by the IDP & Communications Department and can consist of photographs, graphic design (motion and static), video and audio.

When content and material are sourced from an external party, it is the responsibility of the IDP & Communications Department to ensure that copyright laws are adhered to and that no material is used without the consent of the individual or organisation that holds the rights of such content.

Furthermore, the unit can make use of material that is not subject to royalties, unless the person(s) or organisation(s) who hold these rights give written permission to use such material. Reliable royalty-free design services, such as Canva, must be used to obtain material that are free from any royalties and which may be used for commercial purposes.

In accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act No. 4 of 2013 (POPIA) minors may, under no circumstances, be photographed, filmed, or have their voices recorded without prior written consent by a parent or legal guardian. If such written permission is obtained, it must be filed with records.

14. COMMUNICATION BUDGET

The municipality should make available 1% - 5% of its operational budget (excluding the Roads Services Department) to the communication function.[5] It should include, but not be limited to, the following:

➢ branding (signage, corporate branding);
➢ advertising (TV, Radio, print);
➢ printing and stationery;
➢ distribution of newsletters;
➢ internal and external newsletters;
➢ media monitoring; and
➢ campaigns.

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[5] Department of Communications, Communication Policy. Approved by Cabinet (22 August 2018), p.10

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

"Accounting Officer" is the Municipal Manager of the district municipality;

"Branding" the visual representation of the municipality or product, encompassing the municipality's name, logo and visual appeal.

"Chief Financial Officer", a person designated by the Accounting Officer as Chief Financial Officer.

"Councillor" means a Councillor as defined in the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act;

"Communications" include:

a) oral and verbal utterances of a User in or during a meeting where the business of Overberg District Municipality or related matters are discussed;

b) the transfer of any information, whether speech, data, text, signals, radiofrequency spectrum, images in any format through Communication Facilities; and

c) access to or use of the services available on the Internet, including e-mail, instant messaging, websites, file transfer, video conferencing, voice over IP, chat rooms and bulletin boards by Users through the Equipment.

"Corporate Identity Guide" is a manual that exclusively prescribes and describes the municipality's official colours, logo, design elements etc.

"Disaster Management" means a continuous and integrated multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary process of planning and implementation of measures aimed at preventing or reducing the risk of disasters; mitigating the severity or consequences of disasters; emergency preparedness; rapid and effective response to disasters; and post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation.

"District Municipality" refers to Overberg District Municipality, which is a municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality and which is described in section 155(1) of the Constitution as a category C municipality

"Systems Act", the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, No. 32 of 2000.

ANNEXURE A: SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR OVERBERG DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

1. Scope

This document applies to:

➤ Municipal employees using social media for official communication purposes.
➤ Municipal employees using social media for personal reasons.
➤ Public commenting on social media.
➤ Social media communication made at any time, whether privately or publicly, including outside of office hours, and from anywhere, including away from work or on personal devices, whether to an individual or a group.

2. Official Use

All municipal employees (officials and councillors) must comply with the general communication policy regarding official spokespersons and council information. Also, they:

➤ may only make comments on behalf of the municipality with express approval or authority;
➤ may not post false or hearsay statements that could bring the municipality into disrepute;
➤ should not give out personal details, only contact details in line with the POPI and PAIA Acts;
➤ may not post municipal information of confidential nature – a summary of the information preferred by the municipality to be kept confidential as opposed to not-confidential are listed below. For more details on what a person is allowed to share with others, refer to the POPI and PAIA Acts.
➤ may not use logos or vision and mission statements without permission from the IDP & Communications Department;
➤ must only publish municipal information online that can be verified and not that of one's personal opinion;
➤ must refer all media enquiries to the IDP & Communications Department; and
➤ regarding item 2 of the Code of Ethics for Municipal Employees, an employee must at all times, among other things, act in the best interest of a municipality and in such a way that the credibility and integrity of the municipality are not compromised.

Confidential	Not Confidential
➤ State security matters ➤ Information not confirmed by incident commanders during a Joint Operations Centre activation ➤ In-Committee items (red items), not before, during or after council meetings unless council grants authorisation ➤ Confidential clauses in contracts ➤ No names of people who have died during a disaster or any incident where the municipality is involved	➤ Council Agenda or anything publicly known ➤ Service Level Agreements (unless confidential provisions are made)

3. Personal Use

Employees are personally responsible for what they communicate on or through social media and they must adhere to the code of ethics for municipal employees.

In addition, municipal employees:

➤ may not use municipal logos and branding for personal social media posts without explicit permission, but are allowed to share municipal information which the official pages of the municipality have shared;
➤ could be held legally responsible for comments on personal social media platforms which include language or any pictures or videos that are vulgar, obscene, threatening, harassing, defaming, or which promotes hate speech;

- must not engage in content that supports, fosters, perpetuates discrimination by race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, health, status about public assistance, national original, physical or mental disabilities, or sexual orientation [refer to section 4. Freedom of Speech];
- must respect that computers and resources are reserved for municipal-related business and not for private use;
- must ensure that social media activities do not interfere with work duties and performance;
- must not use social media in such a manner that it is projected to be harmful to the municipality or any project that the municipality is undertaking;
- must not engage in posting content or links to pornography;
- must not conduct or encourage illegal activity; and
- must not post information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems or criminal investigations.

4. Public Activity

Content/queries/statements of a political nature will be routed to the Executive Mayor of ODM. A disclaimer appears on the municipality's social media pages, which explains details about the latter.

5. Freedom of Speech

This policy is not intended to limit either freedom of speech or that freedom being exercised within the law. The right to freedom of expression or speech comes with responsibilities; one's views shouldn't be posted online if they harm the reputations and rights of people or organisations.

6. Cyber Bullying

The municipality will not accept any form of bullying or harassment of or by employees of the municipality.

The following examples illustrate the types of behaviour displayed through social media communication, which the municipality considers to be forms of cyberbullying:

6.1 maliciously spreading rumours, lies or gossip;
6.2 knowingly distributing 'hate speech' in any medium, which amounts to propaganda for war, incites imminent violence, or advocates hate speech;
6.3 intimidating or aggressive behaviour;
6.4 offensive or threatening comments or content; and
6.5 posting comments, photos, videos etc., deliberately mocking an individual or group with the intent to harass or humiliate them.

According to the Films and Publications Act A person guilty of 6.2, shall be liable upon conviction, to a fine not exceeding R150 000,00 or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years. Hate speech includes words that could reasonably be construed to demonstrate a clear intention to be harmful, to incite harm and promote or propagate hatred against the said person or identifiable group. Hate speech is also prohibited in terms of Section 16(2) of the Constitution.

7. Official Accounts

The content and upkeep of official social media accounts are responsible for the IDP & Communications Department and the Tourism Unit.

Facebook

- @OverbergDM, www.facebook.com/overbergdm
- @OverbergTourism, www.facebook.com/overbergtourism
- **Profile:** Overberg District Municipality

X (formerly Twitter)

➢ X (Twitter) @OverbergDM, https://x.com/OverbergDM

WhatsApp

➢ WhatsApp: District Forum Groups
➢ WhatsApp: Emergency Communications
➢ WhatsApp: Councillors
➢ WhatsApp: Management

8. General Rules and Conduct of WhatsApp Groups

WhatsApp is a beneficial messaging service, allowing information to be shared quickly and securely between team members. It also provides the opportunity for managers to give additional support to team members when it is needed.

To avoid any confusion, the purpose or objective of the group needs to be made clear to all participants. Primarily, groups will be created for the purpose of sharing important information quickly and securely as well as all participants being able to provide valuable advice and support for each other, however, there may be other specifically stated purposes which will be individual to each group and this needs to be made clear to all participants on group formation.

There are rules of conduct which need to be adhered to by all participants, this will minimise the risk of complaints i.e. bullying and harassment or inappropriate content. A list of rules must be sent out as a message when a group is first created and each time a new participant joins the group.

8.1 A group is intended as a convenient way to distribute information to colleagues quickly and efficiently and for colleagues to communicate easily with each other regarding work matters.

8.2 Such a group is set up in a spirit of informal and formal communication amongst persons sharing the same common interest. In keeping with that spirit, it is not the intention that there ought to be an overly legalistic attitude towards its operation. However, the following ought to be adhered to:

a) The group is not to be used to discuss non-work-related issues.
b) The group should not be used to express personal opinions or post private messages.
c) Posts promoting private businesses, political parties or individuals will not be allowed.
d) Do not spam the group with memes, adverts, deals or irrelevant pictures.
e) Any opinions expressed are the opinions of individual members. Group administrators are not responsible for any comments posted by individual members of the group.
f) It is not necessary to respond to every post unless it is requested, e.g. RSVP. When a busy user gets too many notifications, there is the chance that they will turn off the notifications, which undermines the efficiency of the facility.
g) If your message is not relevant to most group members, please message the person directly rather than the entire group.
h) No inappropriate posts are allowed, which include using inappropriate language, insulting messages, voicing grievances with the Municipality or with individual members of the group or a political party.
i) No comments should be made regarding colleagues, management, work policies or events.
j) If there is a breach of any of the rules, the group administrator reserves the right to remove the transgressor from the group.
k) Participation is not obligatory, and if you join, you have the option of leaving.
l) Do not post in any group between 20:00 and 05:00 unless it is an emergency.
m) Do not send data-insensitive messages. No one wants their last data used up videos, etc.
n) Hit "Mute" on your WhatsApp group (unless you are part of an emergency rescue group). You will still receive all the messages, but your phone will not buzz or make a noise for every one of them.

Respect everyone's privacy – being part of this group requires mutual trust.

Employee Engagement

Although WhatsApp groups can be useful in terms of sharing information and having access to support and advice, it is not a mandatory requirement for employees to join the group.

There is also no requirement for employees to respond outside of their working hours unless an employee receives a monthly cell phone allowance and must therefore be available at all times. If an employee does choose to respond outside of working hours this will be of their own volition and not an expectation of the organisation.

The group rules clearly state that participants can leave the chat at any time and importantly, that notifications can be muted to avoid being disturbed outside of working hours (allowing individual participants to choose when they want to access the group).

Complaints / Grievances

It's recognised that one administrator is unlikely to be able to actively monitor the group and fully minimise the risk of inappropriate or offensive comments being made.

There are clear rules and a policy in place; however, there could be an occasion where a participant is offended by comments made by other participants and wishes to complain. The complainant must not respond or engage in any discussion which they are offended by.

They will need to approach the administrator of the group to ensure they are aware of the situation and the administrator will then investigate further and take any action deemed reasonable and proportionate.

Ungoverned Groups

There is far more potential for ungoverned groups to create situations which will not be appropriately managed, i.e. claims of bullying and harassment.

Overberg District Municipality does not authorise ungoverned workplace WhatsApp groups (workplace groups set up within teams without a manager's involvement). If there are complaints regarding the content of an ungoverned group, this will be investigated further and, if deemed necessary, disciplinary action taken against all those responsible.