

YOU AND YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY



HOAP

HOME OWNERS' ADVICE PAMPHLETS





RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As a South African citizen you have many rights including the right to:

- vote;
- be informed of and to take part in the affairs of government;
- be treated fairly by government officials (*Batho Pele* principles);
- have access to adequate housing, water and education.

Rights are always linked to responsibilities. Some of your responsibilities are:

- the payment of taxes, e.g. property tax (rates);
- the payment of services, e.g. water, electricity;
- obeying laws, rules and regulations, e.g. building regulations and traffic laws;
- to vote in elections.

What is the local authority?



In South Africa we have three levels of government: national, provincial and local.

Local government, or the local authority is closest to the people, because it is responsible for many things that affect your daily life. In most communities the local authority is often referred to as the council or municipality. Local authorities must involve communities in planning. It is important that you, your community and community organisations participate in planning what happens in your area.

What is the local authority responsible for?

Among other things, the local authority is responsible for:

- providing services such as the supply of water, electricity, maintenance of sewerage system, garbage removal, maintenance of public open space, street lighting;
- providing community facilities such as libraries, clinics, parks, sportsfields;
- area planning (including developing plans to address housing needs), land use zoning, building regulations;
- encouraging local economic development such as street trading or local market places;
- maintaining roads, installing pedestrian crossings and traffic lights, building speed bumps, pedestrian bridges and making provision for bus shelters and taxi ranks;
- firefighting;
- issuing licenses to trade in liquor (alcohol) and other goods.



How does the local authority raise money?

The local authority's main source of income is from rates and service charges paid by residents and businesses.

The local authority prepares an annual budget, which tells you how it intends to spend the money and what its priorities are. You have the right to make suggestions about your local authority's budget.



THE MOST IMPORTANT ADVICE IS

- Use your rights as a South African and participate in your local authority's activities.
- Tell your ward councillor what your needs are. They are there to serve you.
- Pay your rates and service charges.
- Demand that your local authority consult your community on matters that affect you.



Who is the local authority?

Councillors are elected in local government elections which take place every five years. There are two types of councillors:

- ward councillors - these are elected by voters in a particular geographical area to represent the needs of people from that area.
- PR councillors (proportional representation) - these are elected by their political party and represent the views of their party.

Officials are people employed to carry out local government duties. They report to the councillors who meet regularly to take decisions on important local matters. You can see copies of the minutes of council meetings and the laws passed (by-laws) at your local municipal offices or library.



As a homeowner and voter your councillors must report to you and take up issues that concern you. You also have the right to attend council meetings and comment on draft policies before they are passed by the council. It does not matter if you did not vote for the councillor responsible for your area.

What is an Integrated Development Plan (IDP)?

This is a way for communities to participate in the planning and budgeting of the local government. The local authority uses the IDP to:

- set a long-term vision for development (ten years);
- develop a medium-term integrated development plan (five years);
- balance social, economic and other development needs (integrated development)
- workout detailed annual plans and budgets;
- monitor and evaluate implementation and delivery.



The local authority is not the only organisation you can talk to. Other organisations that are responsible for services that affect your everyday life include:

- South African Police Services (SAPS) for crime prevention
- Provincial Education Departments for schools
- Metrorail: trains
- Golden Arrow: bus services
- Provincial Health Departments: hospitals, ambulance service, clinics
- Telkom: telephone services
- In some areas electricity is not provided by the local government but by Eskom or another company.

Tips:

- Keep informed of local government matters by reading municipal notices in the newspapers, at your municipal offices or library.
- Find out in which ward you live and who your ward councillor is.
- Ask your ward councillor to come and inform your community about what she/he is doing for your community.
- Inform your councillor of your community's needs and of any special projects that you have in your area that she/he could support.
- You can question your councillor on any council matter. If she/he does not have answers they have to find out and inform you.



ALSO SEE OTHER PAMPHLETS ABOUT:

- Understanding rates and service charges
- Reading your municipal account



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