COMMUNICATION POLICY

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Draft Communication Policy 2016-17

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Eden District Municipality (Eden DM) is committed to two-way communication, building and nurturing relationships with its internal and external stakeholders and to form partnerships with the public and private sector.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Eden DM provides information to its internal and external stakeholders about the municipality's programmes and services. This has to be co-ordinated, managed and executed in an accurate, timeous, relevant and understandable manner to ensure that Eden DM:

- reports its achievements with regard to its mandate; and

- is visible, accessible and accountable to the public it serves.

This policy also provides guidelines for an active response to the diverse information needs of the public and to gear Eden DM towards fulfilling Council's developmental mandate. It outlines the responsibilities of all officials in fostering and maintaining excellent communication practise and how the available communication channels shall be effectively used.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The following key internal and external factors need to be continuously strengthened to achieve the strategic objectives of Eden DM:

- Act **responsible** and **accountable** with Council's information, communication technologies and tools;

- **Guard** against the unlawful disclosure of official information;

- **Promote** adherence to internal municipal protocol;

- Maintain a high level of **public trust** and reliance on the municipality; and

- Preserve **a unified culture** of horizontal and vertical communication.

The different roles and responsibilities within the municipality's communication are made clear, what is communicated and by whom. This policy will ensure that communication takes place in a co-ordinated and uniform way.

3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The Communication Policy complies with:

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 documents on the municipality's official website.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Communication Policy seeks to ensure that the Eden DM acknowledges the importance of communications as a strategic management function and as an integral part of its daily functioning. It demonstrates that the municipality is committed to a transparent and effective relationship with its internal and external stakeholders and will do so by a process of consultation and information dissemination. The municipality acknowledges that it has a responsibility to inform its internal and external stakeholders of identified issues, progress made and results achieved in addressing its mandate.

The Communication Unit has the responsibility to ensure that all communication activities, including procurement of services, are done in accordance with these policies and procedures. This requires all communication and communication-related activities to be co-ordinated/co-coordinated and/or recommended by the Unit.

5. COMMUNICATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to ensure effective communication and compliance to Eden DM's communication policy, the following roles and responsibilities are applicable:

5.1 EXECUTIVE MAYOR

The Mayor is the Chief Communicator (Spokesperson) for the municipality. He / she can delegate these responsibilities to the Deputy Mayor or Municipal Manager whenever required. The Executive Mayor, together with the Municipal Manager and Executive Manager of Corporate /Strategic Services will be responsible for defining the annual communication priorities, objectives and requirements. This is done in consultation with the Executive Management team.

5.2 MUNICIPAL MANAGER (MM)

The MM is the spokesperson for the municipality on strategic and operational issues. He/she ensures that the annual Communication Strategy is in line with the municipality's communication objectives and reflects the municipality's priorities. The MM ensures the integration of the Communication function within the municipality's decision-making processes.

5.3 HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

The Heads of Departments are responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with the municipality's Communication Policy and Procedures;

- Attending to media enquiries exclusively through the Communication Unit;

- Ensuring that key communication issues and priorities are identified annually in line with the municipality's Communication Strategy; and

- That their programmes have a communication action plan; this must be done in consultation with the Communication Unit.

5.4 COMMUNICATION UNIT

The Communication Unit is responsible for co-coordinating and/or coordinating all communication activities in the municipality. In this regard the Communication Unit, shall support and co-ordinate all communication efforts with the main aim of enabling the Executive Mayor and MM to perform their functions as Chief Communicators.

The Unit provides strategic advice with regards to:

- Communication Policy and Strategy development;

- Programme planning and programme implementation;

- Development and implement communication plans; and

- Produce publications for information dissemination.

5.5 COMMUNICATION'S FORUM

A Communicator's Forum must be established for all municipal Communication Officers and meetings will be held quarterly.

6. PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS

It is important to note that serious consideration should be given in terms of the particular target audience/group to be reached versus the level of the information provided. The following Procedures and Regulations are the rules that govern the implementation of this Communication Policy.

The language policy needs to be reviewed to address the comprehensive needs in terms of demographics in our District.

6.1 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The main 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 information on programmes, relevant information regarding human resources and information of interest to staff members.

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

- Newsletters;
- Posters;
- Flyers;
- Notice boards;
- Memorandums;
- Emails;
- Workshops/training sessions;
- Staff meetings;
- Corporate Website;
- Pay slips;
- Weekly Events Calendar;
- Intranet;
- Annual Report;
- Social media;
- Podcast; and
- Banners.

Special efforts must be made by Head of Departments to ensure that staff with no email facilities be informed of all official/relevant communications.

6.2 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The main purpose of external communication is to inform stakeholders of the municipality's services and programmes.

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

- Emails;
- Annual Report;
- Pamphlets;

- Brochures;

- Banners;

- Newsletters;

- Corporate and Strategic Documents;

- Notice boards;

- Radio;

- Television;

- Exhibitions and Open days;

- Conferences;

- Information Sessions;

- Websites;

- Newspapers;

- Summits;

- Workshops;

- Social media; and

- Billboards.

All external communication must be approved by the Municipal Manager.

All official documents i.e. presentations/proposals etcetera, must be approved by the Head of Department in collaboration with the Municipal Manager prior to engagements with external stakeholders.

6.3 INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Communication unit must as far as possible disseminate information to Communicators at all relevant B-municipalities and/or Government Departments (e.g. Government Communications and Information Systems), as a cost effective approach, as well as efficient method of information sharing.

6.4 MEDIA RELATIONS

The Communication officer is the municipality's first line of contact with the media and must co-ordinate 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;

- All media enquiries must be treated as top priority and attended to within the stipulated deadline or within 48 hours, whichever the case may be.

- Both media enquiries and responses must be in writing, except for radio and television interviews.

- The official providing the information with regards to an article/brochure/media enquiry etc. will be recognized at bottom of the above. The publication thereof and the recognition of the information provider in the media is not within the control of the Communication unit.

6.5 DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Refer to Corporate Disaster Management Plan approved by Council on 30 March 2015. (Resolution number DC 815/03/15).

This plan has been developed in order to provide key officials, role players and departments in the Eden DM an idea of general guidelines for the expected initial response to an emergency and an overview of their responsibilities during an emergency or disaster. For this plan to be effective it is important that all concerned parties be made aware of its responsibilities and that every official, role player and department and its personnel be prepared to carry out their assigned functions and responsibilities before, during and after emergency.

6.6 RECORD MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVES

6.6.1 Media Enquiries

All media enquiries received must be submitted to records via email;

All responses approved by Municipal Manager must also be submitted via email.

6.6.2 Correspondence/Records

All correspondence directed to the Mayor/Deputy Mayor/Political office bearers will be sent by records directly to the respective offices.

All official correspondence and documents must be handed in at records. With reference to the National Archives Act, all official correspondence must be kept record of; therefore it is the responsibility of the user to make sure that all official electronic communication received or send by the user is send to the Eden DM's Records section as well.

All advertisements and notices to be placed on the website, must be submitted to records (user Department's responsibility).

The following must be added to all tenders/advertisements: "Eden DM does not take any responsibility for the placement of a tender which was changed/amended by a third party."

6.6.3 Personal Information

Eden DM will not respond to enquiries related to personal information of staff/political office bearers and the enquirer will be referred directly to the applicable staff member/political office bearer.

Personal/Human Resources matters must be marked as confidential.

6.7 PRODUCTION OF COMMUNICATION MATERIAL

Production of the entire municipality's communication material must take place in collaboration with the Communication Unit.

6.8 ADVERTISING/MARKETING MATERIAL/NOTICES

All advertisements/marketing material and notices must be signed off by the Manager Strategic Services in collaboration with the relevant Head of the Department.

6.9 WEBSITE

The municipality's official websites serve as its window to the public.

- Only the Communication Officer or a delegated official may place or remove material on the municipality's website;

- A Manager can approve information that is placed on the Municipal website;

- The Manager is responsible to supply information pertaining to their respective municipal web pages;

- 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; and

- All website maintenance and development must be done in consultation with the Information Technology Section.

- All official documents must be converted to PDF format before uploading onto the Eden corporate website to prevent visitors from extortion of information.

6.9.1 General

Websites that are managed by the Eden DM's communication section:

- **Eden DM:** www.edendm.co.za

- **Tourism:** www.visitgardenrouteandkleinkaroo.com

- Websites owned by Eden DM and Management by the Property Management Portfolio:

  Resorts:
  www.victoriabaycaravanpark.co.za
  www.swartvleicaravanpark.co.za
  www.dehoekmountainresort.co.za
  www.calitzdorpspa.co.za

6.10 SOCIAL MEDIA

6.10.1 Introduction

The phenomenal growth in digital technology and the rise of social media platforms, has made online business networking popular across a diverse mix of demographic

groups.

The Eden DM encourages the use of social media to align with current trends, especially the youth, as they are the highest population in the district.

The Eden DM also has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "spoken" on behalf of the district on social media sites.

This section guides Eden officials engaging on social media platforms about the rules when engaging on these platforms. It does not seek to diminish social media effectiveness, but to minimise the risk to Eden DM through the use of social media. Reference is made to the **Code of Conduct** for staff in this regard.

6.10.2 Legislative Framework

Electronic Communications and Transactions Act 25, of 2002

- Promotion of Access to Information Act, No. 2 of 2000

- Protection of Personal Information Act, No. 4 of 2013

- Eden DM Information Security Policy (22 May 2007).

6.10.3 Mission

Eden DM seeks to improve public participation through the use of social media platforms in order to foster cost effective two-way communication dialogue between the municipality and our social partners.

6.10.4 Objectives

- Inform the community about municipal opportunities;

- Display municipal performance;

- To improve service delivery;

- To report on municipal activities; and

- To obtain feedback from communities.

6.10.5 Content Allowed

The most appropriate uses of social media tools fall into the following categories:

- Time-sensitive information that needs to be communicated quick and efficient, for example: emergency messages, floods etc.

- As marketing/promotional platform used to increase access to information of the Eden District, Province, National and International interest groups.

6.10.6 Content Not Allowed

- Communication not intended for public knowledge should not be posted to social media sites.

- Where applicable, marketing posts to the Eden resorts and Garden Route and Klein Karoo Tourism social pages and profiles, will be subject to input by the Tourism Co-ordinator.

- Wherever possible, content posted to EDM's social media sites should contain links directing users back to the official Eden website for in-depth information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with the EDM.

- Employees may not use social networks to disclose any confidential or proprietary information about Eden DM or its employees, customers or business partners.

- When appropriate, employees should disclose their relationship with Eden DM in their online posts and refrain from speaking on behalf of Eden DM when not authorized.

- Users should keep in mind that they are personally responsible for what they post online and be mindful that what they say will be available publicly for a long time.

- Visitors, users and subscribers to social media platforms shall be notified that the purpose of the communication channel is to serve as a tool for communication between the District and members of the public. Eden DM social media site articles and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed:

  - Comments political in nature, or the promotion of political organisations;

- Comments not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon;

- Foul (vulgar), obscene, threatening, harassing language or content, defamation, hate speech or anything that is in violation of applicable Eden DM's policies.

- Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, health, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;

- Sexual content or links to sexual content, pornography;

- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;

- Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems or criminal investigations; or

- Spam.

6.10.7 Administrators: Social Media Pages

The content and upkeep of social media site(s) are the responsibility of the Communication Unit, except for the tourism social media page on Facebook which is the dual responsibility of the Communication unit and the Tourism unit.

6.11 CUSTOMER CARE

Customer Care can be described as the taking care of customers or clients in a positive manner.

We see **Good Customer Care** as:

- Adhering to the Batho Pele Principles, i.e. Access, Openness and Transparency, Consultation, Redress, Courtesy, Service standards, Information and Value for money.

- Treating people with courtesy, dignity and respect;

- Addressing people in their language of preference as far as possible; Providing a good quality service in a friendly, efficient and helpful manner; Giving people the information they need and providing an explanation if the service is not available;

- Keeping the customer informed of progress in addressing their complaints/requests or enquiries.

6.11.1 Customer Care Standards Are Important To Ensure:

- That all customers, whether they are residents or visitors to our Municipality will receive the same consistent high standards of customer care.

- That customer care and customer service are essential to the planning and delivery of all Council services.

- That our staff will always be reminded of their responsibility to put the Customer First and what this means in practical terms.

- That the Council will eliminate wastage by providing services "Right the First time".

6.12 E-MAIL/INTERNET USE

6.12.1 General Terms of E-Mail/Internet Use

- Internet access / usage will be monitored without prior notification. If there is evidence that you are not adhering to the guidelines set out in this document, the Eden DM reserves the right to take disciplinary action, including termination and/or legal action.

- Employees using the internet are representing the Eden DM. Employees are responsible for ensuring that the internet is used in an effective, ethical, and lawful manner.

- Employees must not use the internet for purposes that are illegal, unethical, harmful to the Eden DM, or non-productive.

- Subscriptions to online services are limited only to services that will enhance and promote the business of Eden DM and subject to mm's approval.

- Access to social networks will not be permitted unless prior authorization by the municipal manager is obtained.

- In addition to the above, finding alternative resources that would enable the user to bypass the firewall to visit these sites are prohibited.

6.12.2 FTP procedures (large files):

- When a user wants to send a large file, he/she will send a formal request via e-mail to helpdesk@edendm.co.za with the following information included as minimum.

- The size of the file,

- basic content of the file,

- the reason for sending or receiving the file,

- the e-mail address of the recipient of the file in the case of sending the file to an external user or the e-mail address of the sender of the file in the case of receiving the file from an external user.

- The duration (in days) that the file needs to stay available to be downloaded both internally and externally.

6.12.3 Safekeeping Of Data And Cloud Services:

- All users should carry out all of their work on the Z: drive, as these gets synchronized and backup centrally.

- Officials and the ICT department may not use Internet cloud services (e.g. Google

- drive, Gmail, Dropbox etc.) for official purposes unless approved by the ICT Steering Committee.

6.12.4 The e-mail, internet and intranet facilities are utilised to effectively reach the objectives and goals of the municipality.

Examples are:

- Using web browsers to obtain business information from websites;

- Accessing information resources as needed; and

- Using e-mail to communicate with internal staff and external stakeholders.

6.12.5 The User Must Not Use The Facilities:

- in any way that interferes with his/her productivity;

- in any way that may bring the municipality into disrepute;

- to conduct personal business;

- to harass or offend any person, whether that person be a municipality employee or not; or

- to undertake any illegal activity.

6.12.6 The user must not use the facilities to display, download, store, access or in any other way, obtain data which is objectionable or likely to cause offence. Such material includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Pornography;

- Hate speech; and

- Sexist, racist or homophobic material whether in the form of images or text.

6.12.7 Observe The Organisational Protocol

Always inform your supervisor by using the "cc" field, should an email communication be directed at a more senior staff member than that currently occupied by your immediate supervisor/manager/executive manager/municipal manager.

6.12.8 Potential Grievances/Disagreements/Conflict

When a situation arises which could possibly result in disagreements, conflict, disciplinary and grievance procedures, the matter in dispute needs to first be discussed and communicated between employee and his/her immediate

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supervisor/manager in person and face to face in an attempt to resolve the conflict. Do not engage in e-mail discussions/confrontations which seeks to bypass and/or supersede your immediate supervisor/manager.

6.12.9 Eden Group Communications

Making use of "Eden" mail address (eden@edendm.co.za) is only allowed with the permission of the Head of Department or Municipal Manager.

6.12.10 E-Mail Communication Between Municipal Officials And Council Members

Municipal officials and Councillors are to adhere to Eden DM Protocol.

6.12.11 E-Mail Cannot Replace Personal Contact

There is a tendency to be less formal or careful when communicating using e-mail and that can sometimes provoke irritation or anger. Remember that direct, person-to-person contact is best for handling sensitive, difficult, complex or emotional issues.

6.12.12 E-Mail Is Public

Assume the messages you send and receive are permanent and public. Don't say anything in an e-mail message that you would not want to be made public or sent to others. Avoid any defamatory remarks concerning the image and good name of the Eden DM when communicating.

6.12.13 Do Not Use E-Mail To Discuss Confidential Information

Avoid sending messages that are of a confidential nature.

6.12.14 Correct Spelling, Grammar And Punctuation

This is not only important because improper spelling, grammar and punctuation gives a bad impression of you and your municipality, it is also important for conveying the message properly. E-mail messages with no full stops or commas are difficult to read and can sometimes even change the context. If your program has a spell checking option, use it.

6.12.15 Address The Recipient In A Professional Manner

Prior to writing a message, address the recipient in an appropriate manner.

6.12.16 Cross-Check Messages Prior To Sending It

Read e-mail messages before sending them out to avoid spelling and grammatical errors contained in them. This will enhance effective messaging, avoid misunderstanding and inappropriate comments.

6.12.17 Avoid Long Sentences

Try to keep your messages as short as possible, this will avoid confusion. E-mail is meant to be a quick messaging channel. Be concise and to the point.

6.12.18 Do Not Write In Capital Letters

IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITAL LETTERS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING OR ARE AGGRESSIVE. This can be highly annoying and might trigger an unwanted response in the form of a flame mail.

6.12.19 Don't Send Or Forward E-Mails Containing Libellous, Defamatory, Offensive, Racist Or Obscene Remarks

By sending or even just forwarding one libellous or offensive remark in an e-mail message, you and your municipality can face legal consequences.

6.12.20 Answer Swiftly

The public and private sector use an e-mail message because they wish to receive a quick response. Each e-mail message should be responded to within the same working day, or at least within 24 hours after received. If the response requires more time, acknowledge receipt and that you will respond in due time.

6.12.21 Flaming

Avoid public "flames" – messages sent in anger. Wait and think about what you want to say before responding. Messages sent in anger only "fuel the flames" and are usually regretted later.

6.12.22 Do Not Attach Unnecessary Files

Wherever possible, only send attachments when they are productive and necessary, compress the attachment. Large attachments can overload the server.

6.12.23 Do Not Overuse The High Priority Option

Overusing the high priority option will lose its function when you really need it. Moreover, even if an e-mail message has high priority, your message might be perceived as slightly aggressive if you flag it as 'high priority'.

6.12.24 Don't Leave Out The Message Thread

Reframe from compiling new e-mails to requests or general communication. Reply to the original message in your (reply) inbox - in other words click 'Reply', instead of 'New Mail'.

6.12.25 Do Not Overuse 'Reply To All'

Only use 'Reply to all' if you really need your message to be seen by every person who received the original message.

6.12.26 Limit The Use Of Abbreviations And Avoid Emoticons

In business e-mail communication, limit the use of abbreviations such as BTW (by the way) and LOL (laugh out loud), etc. The recipient might not be aware of the meanings of the abbreviations and emoticons, such as the smiley face :-).

6.12.27 Be Careful With Formatting

When you use formatting in your e-mail messages, the sender might not be able to view the font you wanted to display. Avoid highlighting fonts, rather use bold or underline to emphasise important information.

6.12.28 Do Not Forward Chain Letters

6.12.29 Do Not Ask To Recall A Message

During such an instance, your message has likely already been delivered. Avoid using the "recall" function in Outlook by rather sending a follow-up message informing the recipient(s) of the mistake.

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6.12.30 Use A Meaningful Subject Line

Try to use a subject line that is meaningful to the recipient as well as yourself. Often this is the only clue the recipient has about the contents when filing and searching for messages. This will assist for later retrieval of documents and information.

6.12.31 Avoid Using Urgent And Important

Even more so than the high-priority option, you must at all times try to avoid these types of words in an e-mail message or subject line. Only use this if it is a really urgent or important message.

6.12.32 Don't Reply To Spam

By replying to spam or by unsubscribing you are confirming that your e-mail address is 'live'. Confirming this will only generate more spam. Therefore, just hit the delete button or use e-mail software to remove spam automatically.

6.12.33 Use The "Cc:" Field Sparingly

Try not to use the "cc:" field unless the recipient knows why they are receiving a copy of the message. When responding to a "cc:" message, decide if you should include recipients listed in the "cc:" field as well. Generally, you do not include the person in the "cc:" field unless you have a particular reason for wanting this person to see your response. Again, make sure that this person will know why they are receiving a copy.

6.12.34 Use the "cc" field to inform your supervisor of any communication to his/her supervisor. Take cognisance of the organisation's protocol.

6.12.35 Register official incoming emails with rekords@edendm.co.za

Information can so easily be lost in our email system, using rekords@edendm.co.za will ensure that important emails are archived.

6.12.36 Signatures

Make sure that you use the branded signature of Eden; use helpdesk to register a request.

6.12.37 Intellectual Property

Use of the facility will give the user access to material which is subject to the intellectual property rights of third parties. The user undertakes not to violate such intellectual property rights by copying, altering or in any other way infringing upon such rights. Failure to respect intellectual property rights may result in the User or the Municipality being held civilly and/or criminally liable.

6.12.38 do not access other users' e-mail accounts

The user must not access other user's e-mail accounts.

6.13 BRANDING/CORPORATE IMAGE/PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

Communication Unit is responsible for the corporate image of the municipality. This responsibility includes the following:

- The look and feel of the municipality's office buildings;

- The type of communication material to be used by the municipality i.e. folders, letterheads, business cards, etcetera;

- The way communication material is used and produced; and

- The use of logo's and corporate identity.

- Promotional material using the corporate identity of the municipality may only be used for official purposes. The production of such material must be done in collaboration with the Communication Unit and approved by the specific Head of Department. The corporate logo must be present on all outgoing material. Strict adherence to the corporate identity is a given with the development of any branded material.

6.14 COPYRIGHT

The municipality is the owner of all its publicity material created and paid for. The reproduction of any such material requires the municipality's approval. Copyright belongs to the municipality and it holds the right to allow others to use such

material. The municipality holds the authority against the misuse of the material by the service provider or other individuals.

The municipality retains intellectual property rights with reference to all publicity material, which must be stipulated in the contractual agreements with service providers.

6.15 EXHIBITIONS

The Communication Unit manages the municipality's corporate identity and must be consulted when departments partake in fairs and exhibitions on behalf of the municipality.

GLOSSARY

"Accounting Officer" & "MM", the Municipal Manager of the district municipality;

"AR", Annual Report;

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

"Communication Share", a folder with sub-folders that is used to share content between the Communication Section and IDP;

"Eden DM", the Eden DM

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

This document was signed on the _____ of _____ 20___.

_____

Municipal Manager

_____

Union Representative (SAMWU)

_____

Union Representative (IMATU)