



TELEPHONE USAGE POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES

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Approved:

Council **5.1.**
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1. Introduction

- Garden Route District Municipality is a category C municipality envisaged in section 155(1)(c) of the Constitution whose legislated mandate is to provide services to residents and support to category B municipalities in the region and in pursuit of its mandate uses various communication methods and mechanisms including but not limited to systems, tools and equipment, including communication tools like telephones.
- Legislation prescribes that the municipality must establish controls and systems regulate the appropriate and efficient use of municipal resources.
- The municipality is determined to ensure that telephone contact between employees and other organizations or members of the public is conducted in a professional and efficient manner.
- The telephone usage policy seeks to provide a framework aimed at ensuring that telephones as a working tool is used appropriately and that calls charges are kept to a minimum.
- Informed by the above commitment the municipality herein prescribes procedures for using the telephone and for making and receiving of calls.
- This policy provides for a set of standards to be complied with by users of the municipal telephones and applies equally to internal and external calls.

2. Legal Framework

- The Constitution imposes a responsibility on the municipality to operate efficiently.
- The Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) (Sections 62 and 78) places an onus on employees to take all reasonable steps to ensure that resources are used effectively, efficiently and economically and to prevent unauthorized, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure
- The Code of Conduct for Staff Members regulates against the misuse of municipal property and assets by municipal employees.
- The Batho Pele White Paper places upon the municipality the responsibility and challenges of implementing policies which should have the desired effect of increasing efficiency, reducing wastage and increasing transparency and accountability within the municipality.

3. Purpose of this Policy

- Ensure effective and efficient use of municipal telephones.
- To implement mechanisms aimed at minimizing the impact of abuse of Council resources by:
 - Reducing telephone costs.
 - Preventing the use of municipal telephones by unauthorized persons.
 - Outlining expected recourse for misuse of telephones
- To minimize lost time due to employees devoting Council's time in pursuit of personal or private interest.
- To regulate what is permissible when using Council resources and to standardize what may be allowed as being reasonable calls that may be made for private purposes.
- To ensure that employees borne the cost of using municipal telephone service for private purposes.
- To introduce corrective action measures for employees who fail to observe the guidelines as stipulated in the Policy.
- To instill in the municipality a spirit of promoting cost effectiveness and accountability to the general public and other stakeholders of the municipality.

4. Scope of this Policy

- The Policy applies to all employees of Garden Route District Municipality, and is relevant only to office based land line telephones, excluding mobile phones.

5. Policy

- The Telephone Usage Policy seeks to regulate the use of municipality's telephone to ensure that telephones are available and are used to conduct official municipal business.
- In the direct support of assigned duties and responsibilities of users, and the delivery of municipal services.

6. Policy Review/Timeframes

- The Policy becomes effective from the date approved by Council.
- The Policy will be reviewed every 12 months.
- The Policy shall remain in force until it is appropriately repealed or replaced with another Policy.

7. Principles

- The Policy is underpinned by the principles of:
 - fairness
 - equity
 - honesty
 - accountability
 - transparency
 - openness
 - collective responsibility

8. Roles and responsibilities

- Department Corporate/Strategic Services:
 - The Department Corporate Services through the responsible employee for the telephone communication system shall be the implementing authority of the Policy and shall facilitate its annual revision.
 - A telephone call referred to in paragraph 10.2.3 and 10.3 must be arranged through the employee responsible for the telephone communication system
- Department Finance:
 - The Department Finance is responsible for the payment of the telephone invoice within 30 days after receiving.
- Line Managers:
 - Line Managers have roles and responsibilities as outlined in Control procedures below to manage telephone usage in their units as they do all other Council's resources. Line Managers are further responsible for:
 - making all employees aware of this Policy.
 - ensuring employee compliance.
 - reviewing and evaluating needs and requests for telephone services.
- Municipal employees:
 - All municipal employees are expected to familiarize themselves with the provision of this Policy and to comply with this provision.
 - All incoming calls must be answered within six times of ringing.
 - Calls must be answered clearly by stating the name and surname of the official and department.

- The diverted calls facility must only be used when the employee's desk is unattended and or when absent (not to be diverted to the switchboard randomly)
- Municipal Manager:
 - The Municipal Manager in conjunction with head of departments shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Policy.
- Council:
 - Only Council may approve this Policy and any amendments and additions thereafter.
- Switchboards (all offices):
 - Switchboards will be operational from Monday to Thursday 07:30 to 16:30 and Fridays 07:30 to 13H30, excluding public holidays, and switched to the night service after normal working hours.
 - The switchboard at Main Office, 54 York Street is diverted to the Disaster Management Centre, after normal working hours.
 - All incoming calls must be answered within 6 times of ringing.
 - Callers are entitled to a prompt, polite response from the switchboard operators who should answer the call by:
 - identifying the municipality, and
 - greeting the caller in two of the three official languages of the Western Cape.
- Every effort should be made to direct the caller to the right extension. Incoming calls should not be transferred internally more than once before speaking to someone who can be of direct assistance.
- The Switchboard Operators/Reception staff member at the various offices where the telephone management system is installed must provide the creditors and the Manager Auxiliary Services a report on the telephone usage (official and private) at the end of each month.

9. Policy processes and procedures

- *Provision of telephone service:*
 - It shall be the responsibility of Council to provide all municipal offices or a combination of municipal offices with a reliable telephone system.
 - Council may centralize its telephone operating system through which all outgoing and incoming calls shall be routed.
 - The municipal switchboard (s) shall be housed in a safe and secure environment and the switchboard instrument as well as the office in which the switchboard is housed shall be provided with lockable-device (s), the key of which shall be in the possession of a person designated by the head of the respective department under which the control of the switchboard is assigned to.
 - It shall be the responsibility of the Switchboard Operator to ensure that no unauthorized person obtains access to the switchboard(s) of Council.
- *Telephone usage control measure (official calls):*
 - PIN codes (official calls):
 - Each qualifying municipal official shall be allocated a unique telephone access PIN code to be used for official calls within his location area (e.g. only for George area or Mossel Bay area).
 - Management may change the PIN codes frequently to avoid fraud and to be in line with the vote numbers.
- Direct switchboard(s) lines (official calls):
 - The Head of the Department in conjunction with the Line Manager shall determine which employee may have direct lines and telephone facilities in their offices.
 - Where the employee have a direct dialing facility, that employee shall receive an electronic record at the end of each month on which he shall declare that the calls made are only for official purposes
 - Management shall provide an electronic device for the monitoring of all outgoing telephone calls.
 - No employee shall make a call on behalf of or allow any unauthorized person to make a private call from either a direct telephone line or from the switchboard.

- Call restrictions (official calls):

- Telephone access will be barred on the following classification and distinction:

Access Level	Classification	Criteria	Designation
Level 5	International calls	Operational requirements	Municipal Manager
Level 4	National and cell phones	Operational requirements. No participation in council cell phone scheme	Identified by the HOD,MM Speaker Executive Mayor Deputy Executive Mayor
Level 3	National	Operation requirements. Participate in council cellphone scheme	Unions Head of Departments Officials identified by the HOD/ MM
Level 2	044 and 028 area	Operational requirements. No need to call beyond the area.	Identified by the HOD/MM Portfolio Councilors
Level 1	044 area	Operational requirements. No need to call beyond the area	Identified by the HOD/MM

- *Councillors (except those indicated above) will be restricted to make only internal calls.*

- Employees and Councilors shall only be allowed to make international calls with the specific written approval of the Municipal Manager.

- The Head of the Department in conjunction with the Line Manager shall have the discretion to determine which employees with direct dialing facilities may be allowed to have access to a specific classification.

- Telephone usage control measure (private calls):

- PIN codes (private calls):

- The municipality recognizes that there may be some occasions where it is necessary for employees to make private calls

- Employees should be aware that making and receiving private telephone calls is by local arrangement only and is, therefore, a privilege and not an automatic right. The municipality is therefore not obliged to provide allowance or telephone facilities to employees to make private calls.
- The employee will receive a secret telephone access PIN code for making private calls.
- Telephone access for private calls will be barred on the following classification and only to be used in the area of location:

Access Level	Classification
Level 2	044 and 028 area

- The employee who receives the PIN code will be responsible and liable for its protection at all times.
- The employee in whose name the PIN code is issued is responsible and liable for usage of the PIN code.
- Should an employee suspect and have proof that another employee is using his PIN code, he must report it promptly to the employee responsible for the telephone communication system. A new PIN code will be issued.
- The owner of the PIN code is still liable for any costs arising out of the calls made by someone who fraudulently obtained it. Therefore, any telephone call made from any extension by means of an employee's private PIN code will be deemed to have been made by that particular employee.
- No private call may be directed through the switchboard.
- At the end of each month the employee responsible for the telephone communication system shall provide the Head of the Departments an electronic record of private calls made by the employees in his department for that month.
- An employee may obtain, on request, a copy of the private calls made for that month.
- The Department Finance shall receive from the employee responsible for the telephone communication system a complete list of employees who made private telephone calls and cost thereof.

- The Department Finance shall, on the basis of the information supplied, deduct from the official's salary the full cost of private calls made including VAT for the month.
- When making or receiving a private call, officials should take account of the following regulations:
 - The making/receiving of private telephone calls shall be kept to a minimum
 - Private telephone calls shall be timed whenever possible to ensure minimum disruption both to the work of the individual and to the workload of the colleagues.
 - It is not acceptable for employees to conduct regular private business with municipality's telephone network. Any such abuse of the telephone system (includes but not limited to providing false information in terms of official calls made, altering of figures in the statements) could result in these instances being considered of fraudulent nature, which may lead to disciplinary action against the employee.
 - Such abuse could also lead to the withdrawal of the facility to make private telephone calls.
- Control procedures:
 - The Department Support Services through the employee responsible for the telephone communication system is responsible for the implementation to ensure effective functioning.
 - Line Managers are responsible for monitoring the conduct of their subordinates to ensure that they use the system effectively and efficiently.
 - No telephone calls are to be made from fax machines.
 - No employee shall be entitled to make use of fax machines for private faxes.
 - No landline adaptors will be allowed to be misused/removed.

- Telephone accounts:
 - The employee responsible for the telephone communication system shall provide each department the following information electronically on a monthly basis:
 - number of calls, duration and total amount per section,
 - detailed report of the number of private calls made by employees and cost.
 - The employee responsible for the telephone communication system shall provide each Head of Department the following information electronically on a monthly basis:
 - total telephone account.
 - telephone account per department.
 - top five divisions per department (based on amount and duration) (official calls).
 - top five employees per department (based on amount and duration) (private calls).

10. Acknowledgement and Approval

The policy was approved on 30 October 2020