



# **KARIBIB TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNICATION POLICY**



2020

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**DEFINITION**

**ACRONYMS**

**COMMUNICATION POLICY**

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**
- 3. GUIDELINES FOR COUNCIL STAFF AND COUNCILLORS WHEN DEALING WITH THE MEDIA**
- 4. STAFF COMMUNICATION (INTERNAL)**
- 5. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION**
- 6. MEDIA RELATIONS PROTOCOL**
- 7. POLICY ON USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**
- 8. PRINCIPLES OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION**
- 9. ENSURE THAT THE KARIBIB TOWN COUNCIL BRAND IS CONSISTENT**
- 10. COPYRIGHT**
- 11. LANGUAGE POLICY**
- 12. PROCEDURES AND COMPLIANCE**



## DEFINITIONS

In this policy, unless the context indicates otherwise, the terms listed below will be understood to have the following meaning:

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Branding</b>               | Means a marketing practice in which a town council creates a name, logo or design that is easily identifiable as belonging to the council, where such a name will enhance the marketability.                                                                     |
| <b>Crisis</b>                 | Means an abnormal situation where prompt action, beyond normal procedures, is required in order to limit damage to persons, property or the environment.                                                                                                         |
| <b>Communication policy</b>   | Provides the institutional framework in which the communication plan is implemented. It covers Section of responsibilities and general guidelines for communicating with various target stakeholders and as to who can act as spokespeople for the town council. |
| <b>Department</b>             | Means the Department within Town Council Structure                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>External communication</b> | Means communication that originates from within Karibib Town Council where such communication/messages are intended for the public                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Internal communication</b> | Means communication that originates within Karibib Town Council departments where such communication/messages are solely intended for officials within said departments or, as the case may be, for officials functioning within Karibib Town Council as a whole |
| <b>Social media</b>           | Is a term for the platforms that can be used to engage with internal and external stakeholders in the form of highly accessible digital technologies such as blogs, podcasts, social networks, wikis, micro-blogs and message boards                             |
| <b>Spokesperson</b>           | Means a delegated person who speaks on behalf of Karibib                                                                                                                                                                                                         |



## **ACRONYMS USED**

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

LED: Local Economic Development

HOD: Head of Department

MC: Management Committee

KTC: Karibib Town Council



### 1. INTRODUCTION

Karibib Town Council has a duty to engage effectively with its residents, partners, employees and stakeholders and has therefore developed a Communication Policy. Communication is a complex, multi-dimensional topic and, contrary to popular belief, it is not only about public relations.

The overall aim is that Council communications should be a two-way process; to give people the information to understand accurately what we do, so they can make informed decisions, and to get information from residents and stakeholders so we can understand their needs.

#### **Policy Objectives:**

Council acknowledges that the effective dissemination of information and communication is a vital element in building a positive identity for Council through greater community awareness of its services, activities, achievements and resources.

#### **The objectives of this policy are:**

- Ensure Council communicates in an effective, standardised and coordinated procedure which increases public interest in council matters
- Provide regular and consistent communication on Council's projects and activities
- Create a positive and professional image for Karibib Town Council through open communication
- Respond to issues raised in the media in a timely and appropriate manner
- Ensure staff are kept fully up to date and informed about Council matters.

#### **Key Communicators**

Everyone at the council is effectively a communicator; however, those holding positions such as the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Head of Department (HOD), Local Economic Development (LED) & Corporate Communication Officer can be considered as key communicators.



Therefore, it is important that they communicate the same outlook on various issues and promote the same strategic vision and objectives.

### **Council's Stakeholders**

When developing communication strategies and key messages, it is imperative that communication is addressed to the correct and targeted stakeholders. The characteristics of each stakeholder must be considered including their needs, wants, attitudes, expectations and perceptions of Council in addition to how they receive their information.

Karibib Town Council's communication stakeholders include but not limited to:

- The media;
- Visitors to Karibib;
- Employees of Karibib Town Council;
- Karibib Councillors;
- Potential residents of Karibib;
- Ratepayers and residents;
- Investors, developers and individuals with business interests within Karibib;
- Central government
- Other Sub- National governments

## **2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

This policy applies to all Council employees, Councillors, Council committee members, delegates of Council and contractors working for Council.

- The Mayor or Deputy Mayor Or any designate in that capacity in his/her absence is the official spokesperson on any official political matters and responsible to address the community in an event. This responsibility may be delegated to the Chairperson of the Management Committee when required.
- The CEO is the official spokesperson on any human resource issues related to the Councillors and any media comment will be done through the CEO.
- The CEO or Acting CEO/ designate in that capacity in his/her absence is the spokesperson for strategic or operational issues.



- He/she must ensure that the communication strategy is in line with the council communication objectives and reflects the council's priorities. The CEO is responsible for integrating the communication function with the decision-making process and for communicating matters of an administrative nature. This responsibility may be delegated to the HOD when required.
- Head of department are responsible for ensuring compliance with the communication policy and to ensure, in consultation with the LED, Corporate & Waste Management Department, that their programmes have communication plans in place as part of their strategies.
- LED, Corporate & Waste Management department is responsible for overseeing and implementing the communication strategy. The LED, Corporate & Waste Management department is responsible for coordinating media communications, media briefings, media statements and handling media enquiries as well as the procurement of communications products and services. The Department must also ensure that the communication policy is communicated to the employees and is adhered to.
- Each HOD is a spokesperson/shall advise on matters of a technical or specialist nature in relation to his or her department – they should attend to media enquiries through the LED, Corporate & Waste Management Department. This authority may be delegated to a person standing in officially for the HOD. Comment will go out in the name of the HOD unless otherwise stipulated.
- Councillors are entitled to express their own views or those of the political party they represent through the media, subject to the codes of conduct set out the Local Authority Act of 23 of 1992 as amended and with due regard for the respective roles of Council and the council administration.



## Principles of Good Communications

This Communications Policy has been developed based upon the principles of good communication.

- **Visibility:** To commence or maintain a strong two-way communication relationship with stakeholders, it is important that we are visible as much as possible. Visibility leads to recognition and acceptance plus it allows the stakeholders to see the breadth and value of your work.
- **Simplicity:** The stakeholders are busy with many aspects of their lives whether at work or home. Communication must be simple and straight forward to ensure maximum readers and save time.
- **Repetition:** Wherever possible, a repetitive schedule should be devised for message placement to ensure it receives stakeholder's consideration. The more a message is repeated the wider its audience will become.
- **Value:** Ensuring a message has a reasonable level of value for the recipient is paramount to gain their attention and interest. A simple rule of thumb here is that Council operating procedures hold little value to the stakeholders but how those procedures affect the stakeholders hold a high level of value. Therefore, messages should be structured with the stakeholder's effect as their foundation.
- **Variety:** To ensure a message is received by the stakeholders, it needs to be placed in a number of different communication vehicles. The more vehicles (strategic noticeboards, Council's Facebook page, Council's website, newspapers, media outlets, direct mail, other social media, etc) it appears in the wider its likely coverage will be.
- **Listening:** Good (and effective) communication requires two parties -the giver and the receiver. If you send a message you must also expect to receive some form of response at times. It is important that feedback on all issues is encouraged and processed. Nothing will dampen the stakeholder's interest quicker than the belief they are not being listened to.
- **Consistency:** To build credibility and a positive reputation, messages need to be consistent. If your messages are ALWAYS simple, hold value for the recipient, encourage feedback and are placed in a variety of different places



they will generate interest and earn respect at an increasing level each time they are placed.

- **Evaluation:** The only accurate way of knowing if your communication is effective is to evaluate it (and the best way to do that is to set a goal for each one and then evaluate if it has been achieved).

### 3. GUIDELINES FOR COUNCIL STAFF AND COUNCILLORS WHEN DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

- **General matters:** Comment on general Council matters is restricted to the Mayor/ CEO/ LED, Corporate & Waste Management department. Permission may be given by the Mayor, CEO/LED & Corporate, Waste Management department for other staff or councillors to make comments.
- **Contentious issues of a sensitive or controversial nature:** Any formal comment on behalf of Council is restricted to the CEO/ LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department. If a journalist phones another Councillor or member of staff, they are asked to politely refer the matter to the CEO/ LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department.
  - Do not reply “no comment” or “I am not allowed to talk to the media” as this implies Council has something to hide. In accordance with the objectives of this policy, restricting comment to the CEO/ LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department helps ensure Council sends a strong and consistent message to the stakeholders and presents a unified front.
- **Letters to the editor:** Staff and Councillors, with the exception of the CEO/ LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department, are prohibited from submitting Letters to the Editors (Newspapers) regarding Council related business in their capacity as a staff member or Councillor without the written permission of the CEO. Council staff and Councillors may write Letters to the Editor as private individuals on the conditions that they are not identified as Councillors or Council employees and their comments are not perceived as representing official Council position or policy.



- **Photographs/film footage:** Council staff are encouraged to participate in any photographs or filming to promote Council in a positive light with permission from their department. Other requests for photographs and filming are to be directed to the LED & Corporation Communication Officer.
- **Media Releases:** To ensure a consistent approach, all media releases shall be issued through the office of the LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department after approval is obtained from the office of the CEO.

### **Manage the Media Effectively to Promote the Council**

- Council will endeavour to establish and maintain a good working relationship with local and regional media outlets. It is necessary for Council to provide accurate, timely and cost-effective information to media outlets that portrays an accurate message. Be helpful, polite and positive.
- All Council staff-initiated contact with the media must come through the CEO/LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department.
- Have a regularly updated briefing sheet on council positions on topical issues that can be issued without clearance to enable a quick response time.
- Assist in making arrangements for interviews with the appropriate person. Ensure the officials are fully briefed and available for interview if required.
- Prepare press releases on success stories and send them to media. Make sure that press releases are newsworthy.
- Prepare short case study overviews of successful projects -, new infrastructure development and send to relevant institutions.
- The use of photographs, images, graphs and maps is encouraged to strengthen messages. The supply of images to the media can assist in the explanation of a difficult situation and greatly increase the likelihood of the media using the story.
- When responding to negative coverage, contact the journalist involved and offer an interview with the relevant spokesperson and/or send a letter to the paper clarifying the council's position.
- When an article or broadcast is blatantly misleading or factually incorrect, the media must be contacted after publication or broadcast to demand an apology



or correction. When such follow-up is deemed necessary, this must be done through or in conjunction with the CEO\LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department.

#### **4. STAFF COMMUNICATION (INTERNAL)**

Building and maintaining good relationships with staff is crucial to achieving effective communication. Effective internal communication is not a one-way process. It is a multi-way process that flows up, down and across the organisation. It also encourages a participatory approach to change management, increases employee morale and encourages more effective communication between employees across department and management levels.

Council utilises four main methods of communication with its staff: Face to face, Verbal, Electronic and Written. These are utilised in many ways, including but not limited to:

- New employee induction process ensuring a full understanding of the operations of Council
- Utilisation of staff e-mails to distribute key messages and keep staff informed.
- Staff memos and file notes
- Payslip messages
- Council staff meetings held on quarterly basis.
- Regular management and departmental meeting
- Year End Functions or Team building exercises
- Ordinary Management Committee meeting and Ordinary Full Council meeting

#### **5. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

The main purpose of external communications is to inform stakeholders of services and programmes offered by the Council. Various communication tools and mediums are used to communicate with stakeholders:

- Newsletters
- Brochures



- Billboards
- Radio
- Short Message Service (SMS)
- Television
- Exhibitions/Council Showcase
- Conferences
- Workshops
- Internet
- External website
- Newspapers

All external communication campaigns must be approved by the CEO.

## **6. MEDIA RELATIONS PROTOCOL**

- The CEO should be the first point of contact for all enquiries.
- Any Councillor responding to a journalist in their capacity as a 'member of the public' or a professional group representative should clearly state that they are responding in that capacity and not as a Councillor.
- Some media enquiries will require a quick response, particularly in emergency situations. The CEO and HOD are required to support the LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department to ensure deadlines are met. This ensures the Town Council does not lose its right to reply and can provide an accurate, balanced and positive account of its actions.
- The Town Council will be pro-active in approaching the media with press releases, articles and information that publicises an event, story or topical subject that is associated with and has a positive impact on Karibib residents, businesses and the local environment.
- Press releases and statements will be prepared by the CEO/ LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department as required, and will normally be restricted to matters that have been debated and agreed by the Town Council.

## **Maintain Confidentiality & Privacy**



Council Members will not post information discussed during closed or in-camera sessions of Council, private or confidential information about members of Council, employees, information or situations involving named or pictured individuals without their permission. Do not post anything that you would not present in a public forum.

## **7. POLICY ON USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Government has adopted a policy on the use of social media policy and implementation plan 2016/17 - 2019/20. The policy is adopted and incorporated for Council's use.

Social Media platforms that can be used by and Local Authorities include the following, but not limited to:

### **7.1. Facebook**

- Arguably the most popular social media platform;
- Provides a way for users to build connections, share information and interact with the public.
- Used by all ages, but biggest age group in Namibia is now 18-50;
- Good for building communities quickly.

### **7.2. Twitter**

- Platform allows Council to disseminate information and interact with the public instantly;
- Only allows 140 character and this limit forces it to be clear and concise
- Average age of Twitter user is 25 – 50;
- Is conversational, and provides a way for users to build connections, share information

### **7.3. Instagram**

- Instagram is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service



- Enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them either publicly or privately on the application
- Is used by all ages, but biggest age group in Namibia is now 18-50;

#### **7.4. YouTube**

- Is a social media platform that allows users to share and view video contents
- Very popular among young people;
- Subscription may be required for constant engagements
- Is used by all ages, but biggest age group in Namibia is now 18-50

#### **7.5. Blogging**

- Allows direct engagement;
- Allows authority and leadership;
- Is interactive
- Used by all ages, but biggest age group in Namibia is now 25-50

#### **7.6. LinkedIn**

- Is a professionally oriented platform
- Used by individuals and companies to create profiles;
- Allows users to disseminate and share information

#### **7.7. Short Messaging Service (SMS)**

- Councils shall create a toll-free SMS line on which the public can send queries and complains;
- Helps Councils to reach a wider audience through bulk messages.

#### **7.8. WhatsApp**

- Allows the public to send queries and complains;
- Allow Council to share information with certain target groups.

### **Protocols governing use of social media in an official capacity**



All Council Employees, Officials and Councillors must comply with the general communication policy regarding official spokespersons. In addition, they:

- May only make comments on behalf of the council with express approval or authority from the CEO.
- May not engage in online communication activities that could bring the council into disrepute.
- Should not give out personal details, only official contact details.
- May not post material protected by copyright.
- May not use logos or vision and mission statements without permission from the CEO/LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department.
- Must only publish information online that can be verified and not personal opinion.
- Must refer all media enquiries to the office of the CEO or the LED & Corporate, Waste Management Department.
- An employee must at all times act in the best interest of the Council and in such a way that the credibility and integrity of the Council is not compromised.

### **Protocols governing the use of social media in a personal capacity**

All Council representatives should bear in mind that information they share through social networking applications, even if they are on private spaces, are still subject to copyright, data protection.

They must also operate in line with the Council's own policies and thus:

- May not use Council logos and branding for personal social media posts without explicit permission.
- Can be held legally responsible for comments posted on personal social media platforms.
- Must respect that computers and resources are reserved for council-related business.



- Must ensure that personal online activities do not interfere with work duties and performance.
- That the use of the social media be in a professional manner and not portray any unprofessional or socially unacceptable behaviour as an official of the Council, such as the use of bad language or racially unacceptable comments.

## **8. PRINCIPLES OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION**

In the event of an occurrence that causes significant disturbance in the Council's activities which has the potential of causing long-term reputational damage, crisis communication in accordance with the following principles is required:

- Whenever possible, crisis communication must be undertaken pre-emptively in order to prevent or minimise a crisis.
- The HOD whose area of responsibility is involved should inform the CEO, Mayor, and other HOD immediately
- Speedy, pro-active and regular communication of crisis information must be maintained as circumstances change.
- Relevant crisis information concerning all affected components of the council must be made available to all concerned.
- In view of the importance of the media in times of crisis due to their role in informing the general public, effective relationships with media must be maintained.
- Taking into account that different media are relevant for different stakeholders, all the different traditional and new media channels must be used to communicate with stakeholders.
- Employees are kept informed of the situation via the Office of the CEO.

## **9. ENSURE THAT THE KARIBIB TOWN COUNCIL BRAND IS CONSISTENT**

There are many elements to a corporate identity, which encompasses published materials (print, online, packaging, signboard, etc.), the functional items (vehicles,



uniforms, buildings and equipment) and the performance of an organisation. A strong corporate identity rests on consistent branding of all elements.

The Council will brand its communications consistently, ensuring a single brand identity by:

- Making sure staff have access to electronic logos and templates (notices, marketing material such banner, posters etc);
- Using a uniform font type and Council logo;
- Developing a photographic library which supports the Council's brand and is available to staff;
- Ensuring the brand is reinforced through visual media such as advertising.

## **10. COPYRIGHT**

Overstrand Council owns all publicity material and information it has paid for or created. Subsequently, the reproduction of any such material requires the approval of the Council. Equally, given its copyright, the Council has the freedom to allow others to use material free of charge. Also, the authority to prevent anyone, including the producer, from misusing the material.

## **11. LANGUAGE POLICY**

The Constitution of Namibia provides that Local Authorities must consider the language usage and preferences of the community. The two (2) primary languages spoken in Karibib Local Authority area are English and Afrikaans. All important and/or mandated communication must be all published in English. The audience may determine the choice of language used in communications during public participations.

## **12. PROCEDURES AND COMPLIANCE**

This policy is intended to ensure that the Council engages in a transparent and coordinated manner with its public and communicates a unified message in a coherent and standardised manner. This Communication Policy and its procedures are



applicable to all Councillors as well as employees of KTC and will be communicated internally accordingly.

#### Policy review

This policy must be reviewed at least every year and be amended annually or as and when amendments to legislation and/or policies necessitate.

| Policy Section  | Communication |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Current update  | N/A           |
| Signed By CEO   |               |
| Signed By Mayor |               |

