

A LANGUAGE POLICY
FOR
OVERSTRAND MUNICIPALITY

Hermanus
July 2008

Executive Summary

This document first discusses the way in which a municipal language policy is required to be drafted. Policy formulation is based on three sets of information, statutory, procedural and empirical. The statutory and procedural requirements emanate from national and provincial legislative and administrative agencies. The empirical requirement is locally generated, and in this instance comprises the results of a sociolinguistic survey conducted in the municipal area of Overstrand in June 2008.

Based on an integrated approach to the three above-mentioned sets of data, a draft policy for Overstrand Municipality is presented. After spelling out eleven aspects of the policy, a strategy is provided to extend multilingualism within the Municipality. This comprises the creation of a Unit for Multilingualism and a Forum for Multilingualism, and the introduction of training programmes for officials in the three official languages. In two final sections recommendations are made on a *modus operandi* for extending multilingualism in municipal wards and for monitoring implementation of the language policy.

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Draft Language Policy for Overstrand Municipality

1. Background

The language policy proposed below is based on three elements.

1.1. Statutory requirements

The first of these comprises the country's policy and statutory requirements on multilingualism.¹ These provide for the recognition and promotion of the 11 official languages of South Africa as a whole and for the official languages of the various provinces. In the case of the Western Cape provision is made for the recognition and development of three official languages, Afrikaans, English and Xhosa. Section 6 (3) (b) of The Constitution, 1996, further determines that municipalities must take into account the language usage and preferences of their residents.

1.2. Guidelines on developing a language policy

The second element relates to guidelines drawn up by various national and provincial language agencies to assist local governments in compiling and implementing language policies.² These guidelines, based on the above mentioned statutory requirements, thus take implementation of multilingualism to local government level. The guidelines provide that at local government level the linguistic characteristics of communities be carefully considered and that language policy be based on reliable and valid information about these characteristics.

1.3. A sociolinguistic survey in Overstrand

The third element is therefore based on local knowledge. In order to compile reliable and valid information, a sociolinguistic survey was conducted in the Overstrand Municipal area during June 2008. The population breakdown of the Overstrand Municipal area is estimated to be about 53% Afrikaans speaking, 30% Xhosa speaking and 17% English speaking.

¹ The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)
 The National Language Framework (2003)
 The Pan South African Language Board Act, (1999)
 The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (2000)
 The *Batho Pele* Principles (Government Gazette No. 18340, 1 October 1997)
 The Constitution of the Western Cape (1998)
 The Promotion of Access to Information Act (2000)
 The Western Cape Languages Act (1998)

² Implementation of the policy of multilingualism is set out in the following documents:

The Guidelines for Language Planning and Policy Development (Pan South African Language Board) (2001)
 The Western Cape Language Policy (2004)
 The Guidelines for Implementing Multilingualism in Local Government: 2008- 2011 (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2008)

Before the results of the survey are analysed, the current language practice in the Overstrand Municipality is discussed.

1.3.1. Current language practice in the Municipality

To comply with multilingual requirements, the Municipality has introduced trilingual municipal signage and the monthly newsletter is produced in the three official languages. Municipal accounts are rendered in the recipient's choice of language. On the level of spoken language there are a number of Xhosa speaking officials available to interpret between Xhosa and English or Afrikaans. The interpretation services of these officials are called upon from time to time, apart from their normal line function duties. Translation work is outsourced.

1.3.2. Aims of the sociolinguistic survey

The sociolinguistic survey sought to determine the language use, preferences, and proficiency of officials and members of ward committees. These three linguistic characteristics form the basis for determining a policy of *functional multilingualism*. This policy advocates incremental and realistic development of multilingualism. Its procedural sequence has the following features:

- Consultation with the main stakeholders;
- Rational analysis of the results of the consultation process;
- A commitment to testing the proposed policy in practice; and
- A commitment to reworking and refining the language policy over time.³

Besides gathering information on functional multilingualism, the survey accessed data on the nature and extent of language related problems in communication between members of the public and officials, and between officials mutually. Finally the survey gathered information on the views of the public and officials on learning a second or third language.

1.3.3. Survey questionnaires and responses

Two questionnaires, one for officials and one for members of ward committees, were compiled. The first questionnaire consisted of nine questions, the second of six. The questionnaire for officials was directed mainly at managerial level. Twenty eight responses were received from eight ward committees and fourteen from officials.

Answers to the questions could be analysed quantitatively⁴ and qualitatively. The latter dimension provided valuable insights.

³ Guidelines for language planning and policy development (PanSALB Occasional Papers No.6, 2001, 7).

⁴ As no random sample was drawn, the quantitative data cannot be used as an accurate portrayal of the chosen survey populations, officials and ward members respectively.

1.3.4 Data gathered through participant observation

Besides receiving responses from committee members, the investigator attended eight ward committee meetings to explain the purpose of the survey. Observations made at these meetings extended the investigator's understanding of the functioning of ward committee meetings and their linguistic patterns.

In terms of community participation in local government affairs, ward meetings provide the first level of interaction with the Municipality. It was found that community participation at this level is affected in some instances by language barriers. Based on the predominant language in wards, a number of committee meetings are conducted mainly unilingual. This inhibits full participation and attention should be paid to extending spoken and written communication in ward committee meetings to a second, and in some cases, a third official language.

Another observation made while attending ward committee meetings is that whereas in some meetings participation is primarily at official committee membership level, in others, particularly in Wards 5 and 6, participation has a community character in that 60 to 100 people attended meetings. These attendance figures underline community interest in municipal affairs and may be optimised as important communication opportunities. Also in this instance a sufficiently wide spectrum of languages is needed to accommodate everyone.

1.3.5 Results of the survey

The results⁵ of the survey indicate that language is a sensitive issue and people generally feel most comfortable when speaking their mother tongue. This is natural as the mother tongue is the medium they know best and in which they express their thoughts and feelings precisely and fully.

However, many officials and members of the public are bilingual and are prepared to use the language best suited for a particular communication situation.

Each of the three official languages merits attention and strengthening to optimise service delivery and community participation in local government activities. Strengthening the use of the three official languages is not the same for each language. For example, whereas the predominant language of the officials in the Municipality is Afrikaans, some Afrikaans speaking communities, where the level of English is not high, feel disadvantaged by the fact that certain local government regulations are only available in English. English-speaking members of the public in some instances feel that they are at a disadvantage in relation to officials and in their ward community meetings because of the use of Afrikaans in these contexts. Xhosa speaking members of the community feel most disadvantaged because many of the officials they interact with do not speak their language.

⁵ The report on the survey which includes detailed analyses of the responses are deposited with the Manager of Communication in the Office of the Mayor.

The survey found that the majority of respondents, officials and members of the public alike, would like to increase their proficiency in a second or third official language. Unilingual English speaking people, who are interested in extending their linguistic proficiency, wish either to master Afrikaans or Xhosa. A considerable number of bilingual Afrikaans and English speaking people are interested in learning Xhosa while Xhosa speaking people would like to extend their proficiency in English and Afrikaans.

1.3.6 Challenges which emerge from the survey

The results of the survey present a number of challenges with potentially positive outcomes. One challenge is to train a core of enthusiastic Afrikaans and English speaking officials to speak, understand and read Xhosa. Preference should be given to younger candidates or those who have regular contact with the public. This will not only help in a direct way to serve Xhosa speaking members of the public in their own language, but will also contribute to creating a cultural pluralism from which creative energy can flow. This linguistic competence should lead to the promotion of more official documents in Xhosa and the recognition of Xhosa as a cultural asset of the entire Overstrand community. It is one thing to have municipal documents translated 'in the cold' by outside professionals, but something else if these documents can be developed in-house in terms not only of the language requirements but also of the spirit and essence of their content as local government service delivery documents.

A considerable number of ward committee members expressed an interest in learning Xhosa although some had reservations on account of their age. The community of Hermanus has a tradition of amiable interaction between Afrikaans and English speaking people. Perhaps the time has come for Overstrand Municipality to take the lead to create a larger cultural pluralism by fully recognising and including Xhosa as a language and cultural tradition in the Overstrand area. This will certainly contribute significantly to creating a happy environment for all the people in the municipal area. The benefits of multilingualism are considerable in that it

- 'Enhances effective communication;
- Increases efficiency in business by optimising the use of linguistic resources thereby optimising the effectiveness of the workforce;
- Contributes to improved health and safety standards;
- Enables informed and participatory decision-making;
- Makes educational training opportunities more accessible and equitable;
- Improves working relations; and
- Enhances acceptance and understanding of other cultures and traditions and contributes to changing attitudes towards different languages and cultures'.⁶

⁶ Guidelines for language planning and policy development (PanSALB Occasional Papers No.6, 2001, p 7-8).

1.3.7 Conclusions

In conclusion it may be said that the sociolinguistic survey gathered the required information on language use, preference and proficiency to design a functional multilingual policy for Overstrand. It also provided useful information to extend multilingualism in the institutional framework of the Municipality and in ward committee meetings. The possible wider role wards may play in promoting citizen-local government interaction by extending multilingualism — and possibly other ward initiated activities — was also highlighted.

2 The Proposed Language Policy

In Section 1 the statutory and implementation requirements for a language policy were outlined. The results of a sociolinguistic profile of the Overstrand municipal area were also discussed. In this Section a language policy for Overstrand is proposed.

2.1 Purpose

2.1.1 To give effect to policy and statutory requirements on language policy as set out in

2.1.1.1 Sections 6 and 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996);

2.1.1.2 Section 5 of the Constitution of the Western Cape (Act 1 of 1998);

2.1.1.3 The Western Cape Provincial Languages Act (Act 13 of 1998)P/N 369 of 27 November 2001);

2.1.1.4 The National Language Policy Framework (2003);

2.1.1.5 The Pan South African Language Board Act (Act 59 of 1995);

2.1.1.6 The Western Cape Language Policy (2004);

2.1.1.7 Section 18.2 and 21.2 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, (Act 32 of 2000);

2.1.1.8 Section 31 of the Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act 2 of 2000);

2.1.1.9 The Batho Pele principles (Government Gazette No 18340 of 1 October 1997).

2.1.2 To follow the guidelines set out in

2.1.2.1 The Guidelines for Language Planning and Policy Development (Pan South African Language Board, 2001);

2.1.2.2 The Western Cape Language Policy (Western Cape Language Committee of the Western Cape Provincial Government, 2004);

2.1.2.3 Guidelines for Implementing Multilingualism in Local Government: 2008- 2011 (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2008).

2.1.3 To formulate a draft language policy based on a sociolinguistic survey conducted in the Overstrand Municipal area during June 2008 by using

2.1.3.1 Information on functional multilingualism (language use, preference, and proficiency);

2.1.3.2 Information on communication related problems in the interaction between officials and the public and between officials internally;

2.1.3.3 Information on the interest officials and the public show in extending their multilingual proficiency.

2.2 Goals of the Overstrand Language Policy

2.2.1 To promote functional multilingualism and cultural pluralism by creating a pride in the cultural and linguistic traditions of the three official languages and any other languages which may be appropriate to develop, e.g. sign language;

2.2.2 To contribute to community participation in the activities of the Municipality and the enhancement of impartial service delivery;

2.2.3 To promote access to information in the official language of choice of the applicant for information;

2.2.4 To foster respect and protect the language rights of the people of Overstrand by promoting the development of all three official languages;

2.2.5 As a hitherto marginalised language, Xhosa should be given particular attention in order to attain equal status with the other two official languages.

2.3 Use of official languages by Council and Administration

2.3.1 The three official languages may be used in any debates and other communications of Council and its committees.

2.3.2 The Municipality must make provision for translation and interpreting into the three official languages in written and verbal communication with the Overstrand Municipality.

2.3.3 The official record of debates of the Council must be kept on a magnetic tape (or an appropriate alternative sound recording system) in the official languages in which the debates took place for a period of three months. Translations of any sections of the record into any of the relevant official languages must on request be made available by the Municipal Manager within a reasonable period.

2.3.4 All reports of documents and resolutions of the Council and its committees shall be in Afrikaans, English or Xhosa.

2.3.5 The language of the report will be determined by die language in which the letter/application is received. The executive summary and the

recommendation will be made available in the three official languages, as soon as and when it is practical for the Municipality to do so.

- 2.3.6 A notice of motion in the Council must be tabled in any local official language, provided that a summary of the motion is also available in the other two languages. Exigent motions should be exempt from this provision because of time restrictions.

2.4 Official notices and advertisements

- 2.4.1 Unless other rules apply, all official notices published in local newspapers, as well as those published by the Municipality in the Government or Provincial Gazette must appear in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa.
- 2.4.2 Official notices or tender announcements published in daily or national newspapers shall be in the language of the particular newspaper. Cognisance is taken that there is no publication of this nature currently published in isiXhosa, but notices in this language will be placed on the website.
- 2.4.3 Promotional advertising will be in the language of the publication in which it is published.

2.5 Communication with and services to the public

Any member of the public in Overstrand may:

- 2.5.1 Use any of the three official languages in his or her communication with the Municipal Council; and
- 2.5.2 Be served in the official language that he or she understands if the language of the recipient is known by the sender. No member of the public should be given inferior service because of the language barrier.
- 2.5.3 Exercise his or her right to use the sign language if sufficient time is given to arrange for an interpreter.
- 2.5.4 In written communication between the Municipality and ratepayers /residents, the language of their choice will be used.
- 2.5.5 If the Municipality initiates the communication, the Municipality must establish and use the mother tongue of the target audience as a rule, wherever possible.
- 2.5.6 Municipal publications shall be issued in the language of the target audience provided the language of the target audience is known. Translations should be issued on request. Upon receipt of a request, the municipality shall make the reports and resolutions available in the official language requested within two months of such a request.

2.6 Internal communication

- 2.6.1 The working language for internal oral communication shall not be limited to any particular of the three languages. The most appropriate language for a particular communication situation will be chosen.
- 2.6.2 The language in which training is done should be determined by the language best understood by the majority of the target audience. Interpreters should be used if required.

2.7 Disciplinary hearings

Where possible all disciplinary hearings should be conducted in the official language of preference of the person subject to a hearing.

2.8 Identification signs

Municipal signage, excluding road, direction and street name signs, shall be displayed in the three official languages or in such a manner as to be understood by English, Afrikaans and Xhosa speaking persons. For example international icons may be used, where appropriate.

2.9 Language code of conduct

- 2.9.1 Officials should be sensitised to the value of multilingualism as a tool for building relationships with the public and promoting cultural pluralism.
- 2.9.2 Notices informing the public of their language rights must be displayed in all municipal offices.
- 2.9.3 The public should also be informed that officials will make every effort to use the language of the client or they will have an official who can speak their language available for translation and interpretation.

2.10 Private sector

The Overstrand Municipality shall encourage private enterprises to develop similar language policies through an awareness campaign. Liaison with relevant governmental and non governmental organisations to develop multilingualism will be undertaken.

2.11 Public participation in language policy formulation

Changes to this policy shall be subject to a new round of consultations with all stakeholders (including councillors, the public, trade unions and municipal officials).

3 Implementation strategies

Implementation strategies should run concurrently with the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and the remaining period of the current cycle should be used as an establishment and experimental phase. Two innovations are recommended, one *institutional*, the other *educational*.

3.1 New institutions for multilingualism

The institutional plan has two related elements, the establishment of a *Unit for Multilingualism* and a *Forum for Multilingualism*.

3.1.1 A Unit for Multilingualism

A *Unit for Multilingualism* should be established to initiate, coordinate and sustain a development programme in multilingualism and cultural pluralism. It should function on an integrated linguistic basis and provide an ongoing service to the three official languages with an emphasis on the development of Xhosa.

The multilingual nature of the unit should be ensured by interaction between the three languages. Attention should be paid to the problem areas identified in respect of the three languages through sociolinguistic audits (usually every four years) and input by a *Forum for Multilingualism*.

As the major need in the Municipality is to extend knowledge and use of Xhosa, the Unit should have a fully trilingual staff member. The duties of the incumbent would include the following:

- To manage the Unit by outsourcing translation of documents or summaries from English and Afrikaans into Xhosa and vice versa.
- Organise interpretation services for departments in the Municipality, apart from the facilities already available in departments.
- Coordinate the teaching of Xhosa to Afrikaans and English speaking staff. As this is a difficult training area, a training programme developed for the corporate sector should be used and taught by a skilled instructor/facilitator. The staff member will assist the instructor/facilitator by, for example, taking responsibility for regular speech classes for officials in Xhosa practice sessions.
- In respect of Afrikaans certain local government documents used by ward committees and other members of the public need to be made available in Afrikaans if they are currently only in English.
- In respect of English, spoken language and minutes in some wards need to be more equitably divided between Afrikaans and English or provided in both languages. The ideal would be that ward committee agenda and minutes be produced in Afrikaans and English and also in Xhosa if there are Xhosa speaking members in a committee. The

minute-taking and linguistic skills of staff in ward committees will benefit by this training.

3.1.2 A Forum for Multilingualism

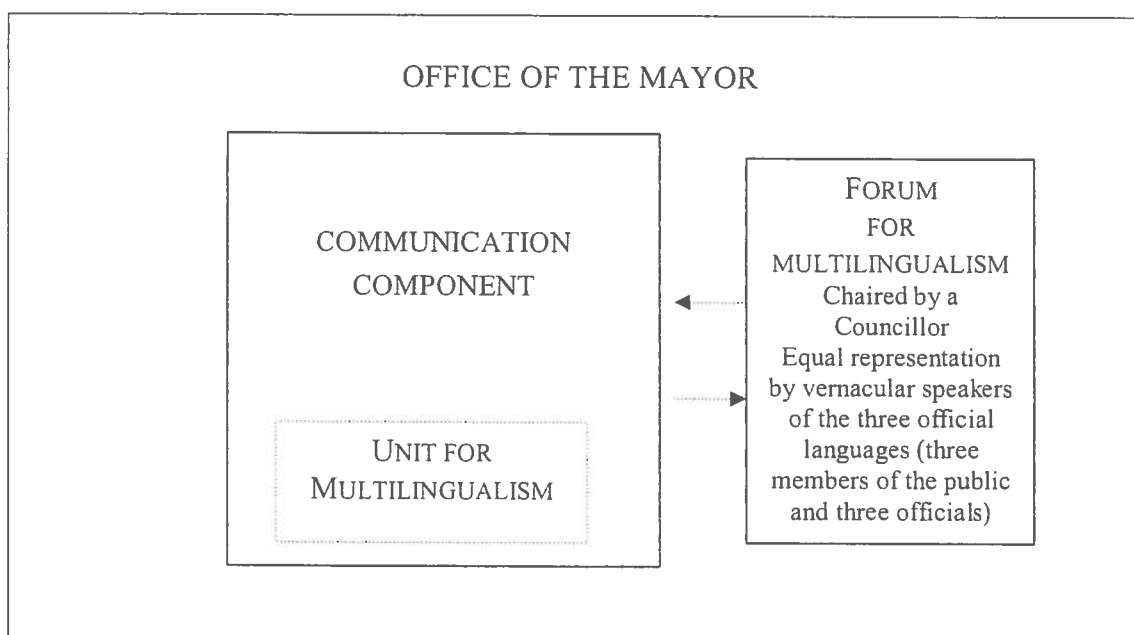
A Forum for Multilingualism should be established to advise the Communication component and the Unit for Multilingualism on language needs that it identifies in relation to the use of the three languages by officials and members of the public. It should also monitor progress in respect of the implementation of the language policy and provide input when sociolinguistic audits are undertaken.

The Forum should consist of a council member and a panel of three members drawn from ward committees, and three officials. The panel should be constituted on the basis of equal representation of home language speakers of the three official languages.

As the Unit for Multilingualism and the Forum for Multilingualism will be strategic cultural and linguistic integrating mechanisms, they should form part of the Communication component in the Office of the Mayor.

Diagrammatically the relationships between the Communication Component, the Unit for Multilingualism and the Forum for Multilingualism is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Relationship between Communication Component, the Unit for Multilingualism and the Forum for Multilingualism



3.2 Training programme

This programme has three phases, an introductory, an intermediate and an advanced phase, each lasting a year. A new training programme should be planned when the current IDP cycle ends.

The programme deals with the training of Afrikaans and English speaking officials to become proficient in Xhosa, and Xhosa speaking officials to extend their proficiency in English and Afrikaans.

The first or pilot phase includes a certain amount of experimentation. During the second phase the experience of the first year is evaluated and the way forward planned. The third year concludes the programme. Changes in staff composition and training needs will feed into the programme on an ongoing basis.

In the following two sections, first the training programme in Xhosa is discussed and then the one in Afrikaans and English.

3.2.1 Training programme in Xhosa

As learning a new language by adults is a difficult task, a realistic and well planned approach should be followed. The initial training group should be highly motivated to learn a new language and have linguistic aptitude. Preference should also be given to younger staff members or those who work with the public on a regular basis. The training of the first group of volunteers should be accorded a high profile in news statements by Council. It is vital for the first group of trainees to be successful as it will motivate their colleagues to extend their multilingual proficiency.

The June 2008 survey gives an estimated level of knowledge of Xhosa by Afrikaans and English speaking people. The current proficiency level is very low. The target is to train a modest number of 20 officials (ten from Hermanus, and ten in total from Kleinmond, Stanford and Gansbaai) in the period 2008 to 2011.

It should be emphasised that learning Xhosa will be a difficult task for those who embark on this potentially highly rewarding undertaking. Training should only be attempted by highly motivated people. People who have prior knowledge of an African language ought to learn fairly easily. A small number of staff members who become conversant in Xhosa after three or four years will have a considerable impact on the image of the Municipality among the Xhosa speaking public.⁷

There are a number of good introductory Xhosa courses on the market.⁸ A course which includes a book and audio material is essential as it will enable learners to practise their ear and allow them to work in their own time. Training should be guided by a facilitator/instructor and a vernacular speaker for speech practice.

⁷ 'When Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first democratically elected president on 10 May 1994, he urged the people of South Africa to learn each other's languages. This, he said, would be "the best way to contribute to nation building and reconciliation".' In: *Learn Xhosa with Anne Munnik* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1994. p. vi).

⁸ An example of the good introductory text is *Learn Xhosa with Anne Munnik* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 2006, 5th edition). This course consists of a text book and a sound CD. There are also courses on the market for intermediate and advanced training.

3.2.2 Training programme in Afrikaans and English

As only a few responses were received from Xhosa speaking officials, this recommendation is based on observation rather than on hard data. For officials who have to compile documents, for example agendas, minutes, reports and tender documents, greater proficiency in Afrikaans and English is required – at least in some of the observed cases. The courses presented in this programme will be available for officials who require extending their skills in either Afrikaans or English.

There are a number of good training programmes on the market to cover this need. In addition to possible outside courses in-house follow-up writing practice under the auspices of the Communication Component and the Unit for Multilingualism is recommended.

This training programme should run concurrently over three years with the training programme in Xhosa. It is suggested that about ten officials per year engage in this training programme. After three years this will have extended the level of proficiency of about 30 officials in these two languages.

3.3 Reward for multilingual proficiency

For staff members who have the aptitude and the enthusiasm to become multilingual, a system of reward should be instituted. Such a system, based on passing accredited examinations, should earn candidates credits towards promotion or remuneration improvement. Accreditation of the courses with the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) should be investigated.

3.4 Budgetary implications

Implementation of the language policy will have the following budgetary implications.

3.4.1 Staff

It is recommended that a professional post be created for the Unit for Multilingualism.

3.4.2 Training material and courses

Provision should be made to train approximately 25 officials in Xhosa over the next six years. This will entail buying course material and remuneration for a part-time training instructor/facilitator. The course material for the introductory course currently costs about R350 per set, R650 for the intermediate course and R850 for the advanced course. Although budgeting is for 25 students per annum, it is advisable that for the first experimental year a smaller group be selected so that teething problems in the training programme can be sorted out properly.

Funding for developing staff proficiency in English and Afrikaans should be budgeted. The numbers for this training could be about ten per annum. Expenditure for course material and the services of a part-time instructor should be budgeted for. It is not recommended that sole use be made of a three day language course with a private training firm. These courses are expensive

and will not lead to real improvement in writing skills. The instructor should repeatedly read, correct and discuss officials' written work.

3.4.3 Translating requirements

It is accepted that most of the translation and editing work will be outsourced and that provision will be made for this in the Budget under Professional Services.

3.4.4 Sign Language requirements

It is accepted that when the services of a sign interpreter is needed it will be outsourced and that provision will be made for this in the Budget under Professional Services.

3.4.5 Signage changes

Signage changes, where and when necessary, must be accommodated in the operational budget of the particular department, section or area.

4 Extending multilingualism in the municipal wards

The training recommendations outlined above focus on the responsibilities of the Municipality to extend multilingualism. The training needs of officials have therefore been analysed and recommendations for addressing these needs have been made. Conceivably similar training programmes can be set up for ward committee members. The Unit for Multilingualism and the Forum for Multilingualism may provide advice for training in this regard. Logistic and funding requirements for training are, however, not the responsibility of the Municipality. The private sector could be approached to support such training in the interest of extending multilingualism to the broader community.

5 Monitoring strategies

The guideline documents on Language Policy suggest that sociolinguistic audits similar to the June 2008 survey in the Overstrand be conducted every four years. In the case of Overstrand the best time to do the next audit is at the end of the current IDP cycle in three years' time. It is recommended that during the first three years of implementing the Language Policy snap audits be done one or twice a year to minimise teething problems.

In terms of its mandate the Cape Town-based provincial office of the Pan South African Language Board monitors implementation of language policy in municipalities on a regular basis.

6 Conclusion

Section 1 of this document discusses the way in which a municipal language policy is required to be formulated. Formulation of such a policy depends on three sets of information, statutory, procedural and empirical. The statutory and procedural requirements emanate from national and provincial legislative and administrative agencies. The empirical requirement is locally generated, and in this instance comprises the results of a sociolinguistic survey conducted in the Overstrand municipal area.

A second section of this document drafts a language policy for Overstrand Municipality based on an integrated approach to the three above-mentioned sets of data. After spelling out eleven aspects of this policy, Section 3 provides an implementation strategy for extending multilingualism within the Municipality. These comprise the creation of a Unit for Multilingualism and a Forum for Multilingualism and the establishment of training programmes for officials in the three official languages. Two final sections recommend a *modus operandi* for extending multilingualism to municipal wards and for monitoring implementation of the language policy.

| Policy Section | Communication |
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