

COST CONTAINMENT POLICY



GAMAGARA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

2025/26

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1. Definitions

Accounting Officer:

- a) In relation to a municipality, means the municipal official referred to in section 60 of the Municipal Finance Management Act; or
- b) In relation to a municipal entity, means the official of the entity referred to in section 93 of the Municipal Finance Management Act;

Financial year: means a year ending on 30 June;

Fruitless and wasteful expenditure: means expenditure that was made in vain and would have been avoided had reasonable care been exercised.

Category D Vehicles: are economical vehicles that have: Sedan, 4/5 doors, manual or automatic transmission, air-condition, radio and power steering.

Group B Vehicles: are vehicles that have: Hatchback, 5 doors, manual transmission, air-condition, radio/cd, and power steering. E.g. Polo, VW or something similar to that.

Overspending:

- a) In relation to the budget of a municipality, means causing the operational or capital expenditure incurred by the municipality during a financial year to exceed the total amount appropriated in that year's budget for its operational or capital expenditure, as the case may be;
- b) In relation to a vote, means causing expenditure under the vote to exceed the amount appropriated for that vote; or
- c) In relation to expenditure under section 26, means causing expenditure under that section to exceed the limits allowed in subsection (5) of that section

Municipal Finance Management Act: means the Municipal Finance Management Act, 2011 (Act NO.56 of 2003);

SCM: means Supply Chain Management Unit, where the procurement process takes place.

Senior Manager: means the head of the department in the municipality

2. Background

The economic downturn has tremendously imposed serious financial challenges on the government service delivery mandates. This crippling effect has pushed the government to re-assess its current financial position. It is therefore vital that available resources towards service delivery, placing emphasis on the efficient allocation of resources, away from spending on non-essential items and frills.

The proposed Division of Revenue (DoRA) continues to prioritise funding services for poor communities. Allocations to local government subsidise the delivery of free basic services to low-income households, and the infrastructure needed to deliver those services.

The policy is in line with sections 62(1)(a), 78(1)(b), 95(a) and 105(1)(b) of the Act, to ensure that resources of the municipality is used effectively, efficiently and economically by implementing cost containment measures.

3. Purpose

In terms of the legal framework, the elected council and accounting officers are required to institute appropriate measures to ensure that the limited resources and public funds are appropriately utilised to ensure value for money is achieved. It is crucial for the municipality to ensure that expenditure is limited to the maximum revenue collected and not spend money that we do not have. Furthermore, the municipality is reminded that the local government equitable share allocation is mainly for the costs of free basic services and to subsidise the administration costs of the municipality.

The cost containment policy is meant to give effect to provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (MFMA) which stipulates that the accounting officer of a municipality is responsible for managing the financial administration of a municipality and must for this purpose take all reasonable steps to ensure that the resources of the municipality are used effectively, efficiently and economically. Failure to do this will result in the accounting officer committing an act of financial misconduct which will trigger the application of chapter 15 of the MFMA read with the Municipal Regulations on Financial Misconduct Procedures and Criminal Proceedings.

The purpose of this policy is therefore, to guide the Gamagara Local Municipality on cost containment measures that must be implemented in an effort to address the impact of the country's economic challenges and to promote growth, address unemployment and equality, amongst others. Furthermore, the policy will demonstrate how the municipality should undertake annual budget preparation in accordance with the budget and financial reform agenda.

4. Goods and services

Use of consultants

- (1) The municipality may only appoint consultants if an assessment of the needs and requirements confirms that the Gamagara Local Municipality does not have the requisite skills or resources in its full-time employ to perform the function.
- (2) The accounting officer must adopt a fair and reasonable remuneration framework for consultants taking into account the rates -
 - (a) determined in the "Guideline on fees for audits undertaken on behalf of the Auditor General of South Africa ", issued by the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (*Refer to Annexure A*);
 - (b) set out in the "Guide on Hourly Fee Rates for Consultants ", issued by the Department of Public Service and Administration (*Refer to Annexure B*); or
 - (c) as prescribed by the body regulating the profession of the consultant.
- (3) The tender documentation for the appointment of consultants must include a clause that the remuneration rates will be subject to negotiation, not exceeding the applicable rates mentioned in sub -regulation (2).
- (4) When negotiating cost -effective consultancy rates for international consultants, the accounting officer may take into account the relevant international and market – determined rates.
- (5) When consultants are appointed, an accounting officer must -
 - (a) appoint consultants on a time and cost basis with specific start and end dates;
 - (b) where practical, appoint consultants on an output- specified basis, subject to specific measurable objectives and associated remuneration;
 - (c) ensure that contracts with consultants include overall cost ceilings by specifying whether the contract price is inclusive or exclusive of travel and subsistence disbursements;
 - (d) ensure the transfer of skills by consultants to the relevant officials of a municipality or municipal entity;
 - (e) undertake all engagements of consultants in accordance with the Municipal Supply Chain Management Regulations, 2005 and the municipality or municipal entity's supply chain management policy; and
 - (f) develop consultancy reduction plans to reduce the reliance on consultants.

- (6) All contracts with consultants must include a fee retention or penalty clause for poor performance.
- (7) A municipality or municipal entity must ensure that the specifications and performance are used as a monitoring tool for the work to be undertaken and are appropriately recorded and monitored.
- (8) The travel and subsistence costs of consultants must be in accordance with the national travel policy issued by the National Department of Transport, as updated from time to time.
- (9) The contract price must specify all travel and subsistence costs and if the travel and subsistence costs for appointed consultants are excluded from the contract price, such costs must be reimbursed in accordance with the national travel policy of the National Department of Transport.

Vehicles used for political office –bearers

- (1) The threshold limit for vehicle purchases relating to official use by political office –bearers must not exceed R700 000 or 70% (VAT inclusive) of the total annual remuneration package for the different grades of municipalities, as defined in the Public Office Bearers Act and the notices issued in terms thereof by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, whichever is lower.
- (2) The procurement of vehicles in sub -regulation (1) must be undertaken using the national government transversal contract mechanism, unless it may be procured at a lower cost through other procurement mechanisms.
- (3) Before deciding to procure a vehicle as contemplated in sub -regulation (2), the accounting officer or delegated official must provide the council with information relating to the following criteria which must be considered:
 - (a) status of current vehicles;
 - (b) affordability of options including whether to procure a vehicle as compared to rental or hire thereof, provided that the most cost effective option is followed and the cost is equivalent to or lower than that contemplated in sub -regulation (1);
 - (c) extent of service delivery backlogs;
 - (d) terrain for effective usage of the vehicle; and
 - (e) any other policy of council.

- (4) If the rental referred to in sub -regulation (3) is preferred, the accounting officer must review the costs incurred regularly to ensure that value for money is obtained.
- (5) Regardless of their usage, vehicles for official use by political office bearers may only be replaced after completion of 120 000 kilometres.
- (6) Notwithstanding sub -regulation (5), a municipality or municipal entity may replace a vehicle for official use by political office bearers before the completion of 120 000km only in instances where the vehicle has a serious mechanical problem and is in a poor condition and subject to obtaining a detailed mechanical report by the vehicle manufacturer or approved dealer.
- (7) An accounting officer must ensure that there is a policy that addresses the use of municipal vehicles for official purposes.

Travel and subsistence

- (1) The accounting officer -
 - (a) may approve the purchase of economy class tickets for all officials or political office bearers where the flying time for the flights is five hours or less; and
 - (b) may only approve the purchase of business class tickets for officials, political office bearers and persons reporting directly to the accounting officer for flights exceeding five hours.
- (2) In the case of the accounting officer, the mayor may approve the purchase of economy class tickets where the flying time is five hours or less and business class tickets for flights exceeding five hours.
- (3) Notwithstanding sub -regulation (1) or (2), an accounting officer, or the mayor in the case of an accounting officer, may approve the purchase of business class tickets for an official or a political office bearer with a disability or a medically certified condition.
- (4) The cost containment policy must limit international travel to meetings or events that are considered critical. The number of officials or political office bearers attending such meetings or events must be limited to those officials or political office bearers directly involved in the subject matter related to such meetings or events.
- (5) The accounting officer, or the mayor in the case of the accounting officer, may approve accommodation costs that exceed an amount as determined from time to time by the National Treasury through a notice only -

- (a) during peak holiday periods; or
 - (b) when major local or international events are hosted in a particular geographical area that results in an abnormal increase in the number of local and /or international guests in that particular geographical area.
- (6) An official or a political office bearer of a municipality or municipal entity must -
- (a) utilise the municipal fleet, where viable, before incurring costs to hire vehicles;
 - (b) make use of available public transport or a shuttle service if the cost of such a service is lower than -
 - (i) the cost of hiring a vehicle;
 - (ii) the cost of kilometres claimable by the official or political office bearer; and
 - (iii) the cost of parking.
 - (c) not hire vehicles from a category higher than Group B or an equivalent class; and
 - (d) where a different class of vehicle is required for a particular terrain or to cater for the special needs of an official, seek the written approval of the accounting officer before hiring the vehicle.
- (7) The municipality must utilise the negotiated rates for flights and accommodation as communicated from time to time by the National Treasury through a notice or any other available cheaper flight and accommodation.

Domestic accommodation

- (1) The accounting officer must ensure that costs incurred for domestic accommodation and meals are in accordance with the maximum allowable rates for domestic accommodation and meals as communicated from time to time by the National Treasury through a notice.
- (2) Overnight accommodation may only be booked where the return trip exceeds 500 kilometres.

Credit cards

- (1) The accounting officer must ensure that no credit card or debit card linked to a bank account of a municipality or a municipal entity is issued to any official or

political office bearer, including members of the board of directors of municipal entities.

(2) Where officials or political office bearers incur expenditure in relation to official municipal activities, such officials or political officer bearers must use their personal credit cards or cash or arrangements made by the municipality or municipal entity, and request reimbursement in accordance with the written approved policy and processes.

Sponsorships, events and catering

(1) The municipality may not incur catering expenses for meetings which are only attended by persons in the employ of the municipality, unless the prior written approval of the accounting officer is obtained.

(2) The accounting officer may incur catering expenses for the hosting of meetings, conferences, workshops, courses, forums, recruitment interviews, and proceedings of council that exceed five hours.

(3) Entertainment allowances of qualifying officials may not exceed two thousand rand per person per financial year, unless approved otherwise by the accounting officer.

(4) The municipality may not incur expenses on alcoholic beverages unless the municipality recovers the cost from the sale of such beverages.

(5) The accounting officer must ensure that social events, team building exercises, year –end functions, sporting events and budget vote dinners are not financed from the municipality or the municipal entity's budgets or by any suppliers or sponsors.

(6) The municipality may not incur expenditure on corporate branded items like clothing or goods for personal use of officials, other than uniforms, office supplies and tools of trade unless costs related thereto are recovered from affected officials or is an integral part of the business model.

(7) The accounting officer may incur expenditure not exceeding the limits for petty cash usage to host farewell functions in recognition of officials who retire after serving the municipality or municipal entity for ten or more years or retire on grounds of ill health.

Communication

- (1) The municipality may, as far as possible, advertise municipal related events on its website instead of advertising in magazines or newspapers.
- (2) The accounting officer must ensure that allowances to officials for private calls and data costs are limited to an amount as determined by the accounting officer in the cost containment policy of the municipality or municipal entity.
- (3) Newspapers and other related publications for the use of officials must be discontinued on expiry of existing contracts or supply orders, unless required for professional purposes and where unavailable in electronic format.
- (4) The municipality may participate in the transversal term contract arranged by the National Treasury for the acquisition of mobile communication services.

Conferences, meetings and study tours

- (1) The accounting officer must establish policies and procedures to manage applications to attend conferences or events hosted by professional bodies or non – governmental institutions held within and outside the borders of South Africa taking into account their merits and benefits, costs and available alternatives.
- (2) When considering applications from officials or political office bearers to attend conferences or events within and outside the borders of South Africa, the accounting officer or mayor as the case may be, must take the following into account -
 - (a) the official's or political office bearer's role and responsibilities and the anticipated benefits of the conference or event;
 - (b) whether the conference or event addresses relevant concerns of the institution;
 - (c) the appropriate number of officials or political office bearers, not exceeding three, attending the conference or event; and
 - (d) the availability of funds to meet expenses related to the conference or event.
- (3) The accounting officer may consider appropriate benchmark costs with other professional bodies or regulatory bodies prior to granting approval for an official to attend a conference or event within and outside the borders of South Africa.

(4) The benchmark costs referred to in sub -regulation (3) may not exceed an amount as determined from time to time by the National Treasury through a notice.

(5) The amount referred to in sub -regulation (4) excludes costs related to travel, accommodation and related expenses, but includes -

(a) conference or event registration expenses; and

(b) any other expense incurred in relation to the conference or event.

(6) When considering costs for conferences or events these may not include items such as laptops, tablets and other similar tokens that are built into the price of such conferences or events.

(7) The accounting officer of the municipality must ensure that meetings and planning sessions that entail the use of municipal funds are, as far as may be practically possible, held in-house.

(8) The municipal office facilities must be utilised for conference, meetings, strategic planning sessions, inter alia, where an appropriate venue exists within the municipal jurisdiction.

(9) The accounting officer must grant the approval for officials and in the case of political office bearers and the accounting officer, the mayor, as contemplated in sub - regulation (2).

(10) The municipality must, where applicable, take advantage of early registration discounts by granting the required approvals to attend the conference, event or study tour, in advance.

Other related expenditure items

(1) All commodities, services and products covered by a transversal contract concluded by the National Treasury must be considered before approaching the market, to benefit from savings where lower prices or rates have been negotiated.

(2) Municipal resources may not be used to fund elections, campaign activities, including the provision of food, clothing, printing of agendas and brochures and other

inducements as part of, or during election periods or to fund any activities of any political party at any time.

(3) Expenditure on tools of trade for political office bearers must be limited to the upper limits as approved and published by the Cabinet member responsible for local government in terms of the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers Act, 1998.

(4) The municipality must avoid expenditure on elaborate and expensive office furniture.

(5) The municipality may only use the services of the South African Police Service to conduct periodical or quarterly security threat assessments of political office bearers and key officials and a report must be submitted to the speaker's office.

(6) The municipality may consider providing additional time-off in lieu of payment for overtime worked. Planned overtime must be submitted to the relevant manager for consideration on a monthly basis. A motivation for all unplanned overtime must be submitted to the relevant manager.

(7) The municipality must ensure that due process is followed when suspending or dismissing officials to avoid unnecessary litigation costs.

(8) Acting appointments should only be cascaded to two levels below the acting position, to curb unnecessary cost, unless motivated to the Municipal Manager based on operational reasons. Act will only be permitted in funded vacant positions, therefore prior to an employee being assigned to act the request must firstly be forwarded to the Budget and Treasury Section to confirm budget availability.

5. Enforcement Procedures

Failure to implement or comply with these Regulations may result in any official of the municipality, political office bearer or incurred any expenditure contrary to these regulations being held liable for financial misconduct or a financial offence in the case

of political office bearers as defined in Chapter 15 of the Act read with the Municipal Regulations on Financial Misconduct Procedures and Criminal Proceedings, 2014.

6. Disclosures of cost containment measures

(1) The disclosure of cost containment measures applied by the municipality must be included in the municipal in-year budget reports and annual costs savings disclosed in the annual report.

(2) The measures implemented and aggregate amounts saved per quarter, together with the regular reports on reprioritisation of cost savings and on the implementation of the cost containment measures must be submitted to the Municipal Council for review and resolution. The municipal council can refer such reports to an appropriate Council Committee for further recommendations and actions.

(3) The reports referred to in sub-regulation (2) must be copied to the National Treasury and the relevant provincial treasury within seven calendar days after the report is submitted to municipal council.

7. Commencement of Policy

This policy takes effect on the date of approval by Council.