AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF WARD COMMITTEES IN THE BUFFALO CITY MUNICIPALITY IN THE PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE

BY

Thandisizwe Henna

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Supervisor: Prof. R. S. Masango

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THANDISIZWE HENNA
EAST LONDON
NOVEMBER 2010
DECLARATION

I, Thandisizwe Henna, hereby declare that:

- This paper is my original effort;

- All sources used have been documented and acknowledged; and

- This paper has not been previously submitted in full or in partial fulfilment of the requirement for any other qualification at any other recognized educational institution of higher learning.

T HENNA
NOVEMBER 2010
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Veliswa.
ABSTRACT

In 1994, democracy in South Africa brought about a developmental local government characterized by democratic and accountable governance. Municipalities are supposed to encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local government. Municipalities are obliged to establish ward committees and ensure that they succeed in facilitating public participation.

However, critiques contend that ward committees have not been able to live up to expectations. The institution is said to be faced by countless challenges that inhibit its functioning. This study has, therefore, been undertaken with the purpose of analyzing the factors that affect the performance of ward committees in the Buffalo City Municipality. The research found that ward committees in the municipality were properly constituted, functional and handle serious issues for the benefit of communities. Communities are not very interested in ward committee meetings and do not solicit assistance from them.

Based on the results of this study, the following are the factors which compromise and limit the ability of ward committees to facilitate public participation: lack of remuneration, low levels of education and skills, unavailability of information on municipal issues and activities; and a lack of municipal support.

Following the research, it is recommended that municipalities put in stringent measures to detect and curb corrupt practices in ward committees. On annual basis they should provide a meaningful budget allocation for the remuneration and provision of facilities and equipment necessary for ward committees to effect public participation. Municipalities should involve ward committees in decision-making.
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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction to the study of factors affecting the performance of ward committees in the Buffalo City Municipality in the Eastern Cape. It gives the background and rationale for the study, a problem statement, objectives of the study, literature review, research methodology, and an overview of the chapters.

1.2 Background and Rationale

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa experienced a legal framework that gave rise to the core principles, mechanisms and processes that compel municipalities to move progressively towards an ideal state of ensuring community participation in the affairs of local governance. This came against the background of an apartheid past which was characterized by an autocratic rule against the African population. A lack of belonging and a sense of being ostracized was felt by the Black communities in South Africa. The apartheid era was characterized by a virtual lack of development, no rendering of even the basic of services, let alone consultation or participation.

Section 152 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, requires that the local sphere of government should ensure and encourage the participation of local communities in their governance. This means that local governments should adopt a vision underpinned by a democratic, accountable,
participative and developmental type of governance (Hilliard and Kemp, 1999). According to Sections 7 and 8 of the Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998). Category A and B municipalities are to be demarcated according to wards and have ward committees chaired by ward councilors. These ward committees are meant to play a vital role in facilitating community participation at the local government sphere.

Section 195 of the same Constitution contains Basic Values and Principles which ought to govern public administration. Subsection 1 of Section 195 states that public administration must be governed by democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution. People's needs must be responded to, the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making, and public administration must be accountable.

According to Section B (1) of The White Paper on Local Government, 1998, a developmental local government should be a local government that is committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives. It should encourage active participation by citizens, not only as voters, consumers and service users, but also as participants in policy formulation processes as well as partners in resource mobilization, prioritization of capital projects (Integrated Development Planning), designing of service delivery standards and performance management tools and methods.

1.3 Problem Statement

Ward committees by virtue of being closest to the communities which they represent are the most strategic vehicle to give meaning to local democracy. Community participation could foster good will and a sense of common purpose between stakeholders and it could also encourage co-operation by communities
on sensitive issues. However, there seem to be challenges regarding the efficiency of this institution. Despite the mandate of the ward committees to bring democracy to the people through participation in their governance, instances of acrimonious relations between municipalities and the community are still prevalent. Violent service delivery protests, reminiscent of the violent apartheid era are common. Ward committee members seem to be unclear about their responsibilities. The above scenario brings into question the success or effectiveness of the ward committees in the Buffalo City Municipality in facilitating local democracy.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to analyze the factors affecting the performance of ward committees.

Specific objectives are to:

- Assess the functioning of ward committees;
- Assess the extent to which community members are aware and satisfied with the services offered by ward committees;
- Establish whether ward committees and ward councillors are aware of their responsibilities in facilitating public participation;
- Establish whether there are any training needs for ward committees and ward councilors;
- Establish the role of ward committees and ward councillors in the decision-making of the municipality;
- Investigate the challenges facing ward committees;
- Establish whether ward committees and ward councillors are supported by the municipality;
- Establish how ward committees and ward councillors work with other structures within the municipality.
1.5 Literature Review

Mouton (2009: 179) states that a literature review is a study that provides an overview of scholarship in a certain discipline through an analysis of trends and debates. He (Mouton) goes on to say that the reasons for reviewing existing scholarships include:

- to ensure that one does not merely duplicate a previous study;
- to discover what the most recent and authoritative theorizing about the subject is;
- to establish out what the most widely accepted empirical findings in the field of study are.

Therefore, by implication, a literature review should not be reduced to a mere summary or a reproduction of a scholarly view on a particular subject. It should rather constitute a critical analysis aimed at, amongst other things, tying loose ends and locating gaps within the area of study.

Before the dawn of the new dispensation in South Africa, the local sphere of government had never been mandated and encouraged to provide structures in local communities which should participate in the affairs of the municipality. However, Section 152 of the current Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the White Paper on Local Government, have established a basis for this. The sphere of local government is well-placed for making democracy a reality at local level. One of the structures, introduced after 1994 for the purpose of pursuing democracy at the local sphere of government, is the ward committee.

The history of the promotion of public participation or involvement in social policy discourse and administration is said to have started in the UK and USA. This is said to have led to the development of many now familiar practices and institutions even in South Africa, such as; the school governing bodies, community police forums, public hearings, rate payers associations, and
requests for public comments or objections. According to a host of South African legislative frameworks, community involvement can either be on issues of policy formulation, service delivery or annual budget preparation.

The Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998) was the first piece of legislation to formally introduce the concept of ward committees. De Visser and Smith (2009: 2) argue that since 2001, ward committees have emerged as a key institutional mechanism intended to contribute towards bringing about people-centred, participatory and democratic local governance. The rationale for ward committees is to supplement the role of elected councillors by creating a bridge between communities and the political and administrative structures of municipalities. At the same time they (De Visser and Smith), pose questions as to how effective these institutions actually are; whether they are useful conduits for community involvement in local governance; whether, as “created spaces” for public participation, they are inherently capable of playing the critical role expected of them; and whether they create opportunities for real power-sharing between municipalities and citizens.

Buccus and Mathekga (2009: 11) contend that while the evident problem at local government level being experienced lately can be explained as a matter of poor service delivery, the problem is also perpetuated by the lack of community participation and engagement at local government level. These two authors continue to argue that the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa gave birth to a new democratic dispensation, where the government was to be defined in relation to its citizens. Although provisions and processes have been made in order to give meaning to democracy at the local sphere, the question is whether the role players in local government have actually done enough to achieve the designated goals.

Buccus and Mathekga (2009: 11) argue that, while the new institutions of local government have been created with genuine intentions to affect democracy
positively and to bring about social and economic delivery at local government, they have not been able to live up to expectations. This cannot be disputed. They argue further that the limited role that communities have played in the local government system in South Africa since the end of apartheid accounts in part for the current stalemate in the system. The objectivity of these two authors on this subject must be commended as they do not apportion the stalemate at local government to the limited role played by communities only, but as just one of the contributing factors in addition to poor service delivery.

Mogale (2005: 136) contends that the institution of government, as stated in the Constitution, should enhance opportunities for participation by placing more power and resources at the level of government which is closest to communities. This opportunity should not be wasted or seen as a threat to the authority of municipal councillors and officials.

The issue of community involvement in local government should be taken seriously in an attempt, amongst others, to win the loyalty of the community and to restore trust and credibility to the institution. McLennan and Ngoma (2004: 286) argue that technical capacity is not sufficient to ensure optimal functioning of local government. By over-emphasizing skills shortage problems as the main cause of the crisis at local government in post-apartheid South Africa, one may undermine the importance and effect of substantive democracy and active citizenship.

This is due to the fact that citizens are not just customers or clients of local government services; they are more than that. Based on the present South African legal framework, citizens give mandate to the local council, the provincial and the central government to rule or govern on their behalf. Oldfield (2008) joins other scholars on the topic by also arguing that ward committees face critical limitations on aspects such as; representation, structural limits to power, the vagaries of councillor and party politics, ineffectiveness due to skills constraints, functionality, access to information and influence on decision-making. Both
communities and ward councillors agree that there are challenges facing the ward committee structure that impede it from being as effective as desired.

Undoubtedly, the above suggested limitations pose a real threat to the whole idea of ward committees, which is to give meaning to democracy through local community-centred decision-making. The recent, and now familiar, sights of mostly violent service delivery protests across the townships, are a compelling reason why a study of this nature should be undertaken. It is in the above context that this study has been undertaken - to examine thoroughly the factors affecting the performance of these ward committees. The reason is not only to locate the hindrances, but also to provide a basis for a mitigation approach towards an effective and efficient ward committee system in the Buffalo City Municipality.

Ward committees are supposed to play a crucial role in facilitating public participation. However, structures like school governing bodies, police forums, residential associations and many others also allow for the participation of the public in one way or another. Lack of effective public participation at local government may have played a role in the recent service delivery protests in South Africa. The functioning of ward committees may be affected by many factors, since they face numerous challenges.

1.6 Research Design and Methodology

Babbie and Mouton (2001: 103) state that a research methodology deals with whom or what will be studied to collect information, identify the subjects and how information will be obtained. In other words this process encompasses how the researcher will collect, analyze and interpret data so as to achieve the aims of the study. A quantitative approach is characterized by strict adherence to scientific methods like the use of numbers, precise measurement, statistical interpretation, laboratory experiments, tables, charts and highly structured
interviews. According to Creswell (1994: 6) qualitative researchers interact with those they study. This interaction assumes the form of living with, or observing informants, over a prolonged period of time or actual collaboration.

Since the study involved a community, people who have feelings, and who interpret their world and circumstances in their own way, a qualitative approach was used. The qualitative researcher admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values and biases, as well as the value nature of information gathered from the field. The choice of using a qualitative approach was made in order to enable the researcher to understand the perspectives, the thinking and the culture of the people the in study in order to assume an insider and not an outsider stance. Furthermore, the research was conducted in a natural setting of social actors appreciating their subjective experiences, complexities and diversity.

Secondary data, which comprises data from the current text, has been used. Primary data is constituted of data collected by the researcher himself. Firstly, a simple observation was made. This was followed by a participant observation. The researcher became part of the subject of study and again all the professional and ethical conduct was observed. People’s in-depth personal accounts and their life history were considered as these may enlighten individual perspectives rather than group perspectives. As the study focused on the factors affecting the performance of ward committees, participants in the study were ward committee members and ward councillors from selected wards.

For the purpose of gathering primary data so as to establish what the views of the designated respondents in the study were, questionnaires were distributed. The use of questionnaires in this study as the means of collecting data was based on the following advantages. Questionnaires are time-saving, cost-effective and easier to analyze. They can reach a wider sample than face to face interviews. They are also less intrusive and more convenient than for example,
telephone or face-to-face surveys. They can be filled in at the convenient time and location of the respondents. The questionnaires were returned and data the data analyzed.

1.7 Sample and Site

Neuman (2006: 219) states that a sample is a smaller set of cases which a researcher selects from a larger pool and generalizes to the population. The act of sampling is commonly used in order to avoid challenges emanating from conducting a study which includes the whole population. Generally, a sample may be individuals, groupings, institutions, conditions or even events. Qualitative researchers focus on how the sample or small collection of cases, unit or activities brings about social life. In choosing a sample a researcher may consider variables like distance, time or cost implications.

The Buffalo City Municipality has, at present, 45 wards and a ward committee in each. In line with The Guidelines for the Establishment and Operations of Ward Committees (Notice 9 of 2005), each ward committee consists 11 members, ten community members and a ward councillor who acts as a chairperson. In total there are 450 ward committee members and 45 ward councillors. For the purpose of this research, two wards have been chosen: Ward 12 in Scenery Park Township and Ward 13 in Reeston Township in the Buffalo City Municipality, Eastern Cape. Forming part of the sample from these wards is twenty ward committee members, two ward councillors and 30 community members. The total sample is 52. The choice of these two wards was based on their proximity and the familiarity of the area to the researcher.

Permission to conduct the study has been sought in writing from the Office of the Municipal Manager. The first step in the data-collection process was for the researcher to introduce himself to ward committee members including;
community, church and civic organization leaders. Thereafter questionnaires were distributed to the homes of the ward committee members and ward councillors.

The criteria used for the selection of the sample was the following:

- Accessibility in terms of distance to travel;
- Possibility of experiencing service delivery problems or backlog;
- Variety of different income earners, social status and levels of education;
- Probability of lack of councillors reporting back to the community; and
- Perceived easy co-operation and support.

1.7.1 Sampling Technique

Sampling refers to the process whereby researchers select a smaller group called a sample, from a larger group called a population. Many writers, including Dooley (1984: 246-248), make reference to two primary sampling techniques: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. According to Neuman (2006: 219) qualitative and quantitative researchers approach sampling differently. Qualitative researchers tend to use non-probability or non-random sampling.

For the purpose of selecting the two ward committees, convenience sampling was used. In convenience sampling the researcher has the freedom to choose whoever he/she wants to. Snowball sampling was used for the selection of community members. This is a type of non-probability sampling which, according to Fink (2002: 41), relies on previously identified members of a group to identify other members. The use of snowball sampling is due to it being relatively convenient, economical and appropriate for use in many surveys.

A total of 30 community members were selected for the purpose of administering the questionnaires.
1.8 Data Collection

Data collection is simply a process of gathering information. For the purpose of this study primary and secondary sources were used to collect data. Primary research involves the researcher collecting the data him/herself, whilst in a secondary research the researcher undertakes the research by reviewing existing data from various sources. Primary sources included the 30 community members, 20 ward committee members, and two ward councillors from the selected wards, and the three councillors. Secondary data have also been obtained from the South African Constitution of 1996, other government legislations and publications, discussion papers, newspapers, the internet sources and Municipal publications.

The following data collection techniques were used in this study:

a. Observation

Initially, the researcher walked around the location of the sample in order to observe their patterns of behaviour and their perceptions of ward committees. Later, a formal observation was made by attending several ward committee meetings in the location of the sample.

b. Questionnaires

As a means of collecting information from a wider sample than can be reached by personal interview, questionnaires were distributed to the
homes of the community members, ward committee members and ward councillors. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995: 31) a qualitative interview is characterized by the participation of the interviewer in the interview, relativism of culture and giving the interviewee a voice.

c. Using documents

Documents such as the South African Constitution, other government legislations and publications, newspaper and magazine articles, internet sources and municipal documents and publications were consulted. The researcher accessed these documents from local libraries, government and municipal offices and even friends.

1.9 Ethical Consideration

Mouton (2009: 238) states that ethics concern that which is right and that which is wrong in the conducting of research. Researchers have to abide by generally acceptable norms and standards. All researchers ought to take ethics into account. According to Neuman (2006: 142) the basic principles of ethical social research include the following:

- Do not exploit subjects.
- Some form of informed consent is highly recommended.
- Honour all guarantees of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity.
- Do not coerce or humiliate subjects.
- Detect and remove undesirable consequences.
- Anticipate repercussions of results.
- Identify your sponsor.
- Co-operate with host nations when doing comparative research.
- Release the details of the study design with the data.
• Interpret results consistent with the data.
• Use high methodological standards and strive for accuracy and
• Do not conduct secret research.

For the purpose of this study all of these ethics were taken into account.

1.10 Exposition of Chapters

Chapter 1 reflects the background of the study. The focus is on the following aspects: the background and rationale of the study, problem statement, the objectives of the study, a literature review, and the research methodology.

Chapter 2 focuses on an in-depth literature review. Existing literature, relating to this study from various sources, was reviewed and critically analyzed.

Chapter 3 focuses on public participation and the ward committee system in the Buffalo City Municipality. The functioning of the ward committees and the challenges they are facing in the municipality was given in-depth attention.

Chapter 4 deals with the research methodology according to which the study has been undertaken, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 5 concludes the study by presenting findings and recommendations.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The democratic dispensation has brought about some changes in the South African local sphere of government. Section 152 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, mandates local government to encourage the participation of local communities in their governance. The Municipal Structures Act (No. 11 of 1998) states that Category A and B municipalities are to be demarcated into wards, and have ward committees to facilitate the participation of local communities.

According to Smith (2008: 14) several factors inhibit the effectiveness and the ability of ward committees to fulfil their mandate. These factors include, *inter alia*: ward councillors` low levels of education, skills and expertise; functionality problems; political dynamics and the relationship of ward committees with other structures. In this chapter, literature relating to public participation at the local government sphere, ward councillors and ward committees are reviewed. Attention is paid to participatory democracy at the government sphere, the dynamics of public participation, the ward committee system, and the legislative framework for ward committees.

2.2 Participatory Democracy at the Local Government Sphere

Piper and Deacon (2006: 2-3) refer to “participatory governance” as taking the views and interests of those affected by government more seriously than in the past. This means that municipalities should promote local democracy, as the
local community makes up not only the electorate that voted them to power, but the most important stakeholders in local governance. In the South African local government sphere, participatory democracy is through the structure of ward committees. For ward committees to be able to fulfil their mandate, they need to be sufficiently resourced and capacitated.

Mathekga and Buccus (2009: 12) argue that technical capacity has been overrated as the main ingredient to improved service delivery at the expense of substantive democracy and active citizenship. In support of the above statement by implication Zimmerman (1986: 3) argues that from the government’s standpoint, citizens who share responsibility for decision-making with elected officers, may have an advantage of facilitating the implementation of plans and programmes. In the first instance, the main beneficiary of service delivery is the community. Therefore, if involved, they would ensure that services are kick-started at the earliest convenience.

2.3 Dynamics of Public Participation

In this section perceptions of public participation and the benefits there of will be discussed.

2.3.1 Perceptions of Public Participation

Based on the literature reviewed public participation inherently comes with responsibilities and commitments. Zimmerman (1986: 3) presents two main perceptions associated with public participation that might result in negativity on the part of government officials and other structures, including:
• Government expenses might be increased as a result of this requirement. Public participation processes involve transportation costs, renting out venues, catering for large numbers of people and the production of countless documents. Regardless of the costs mentioned above, not involving communities in local government affairs has proved to be far more costly. In the middle of 2005 South Africa experienced an unprecedented wave of service delivery protests last seen in the 1980’s.

• At times it has the potential of benefiting a few members of the community, instead of covering the entire community. It therefore means that there could be instances of disagreement between community members themselves as to what should be done first. In cases of disagreement the broader community, especially the poor, suffer, as projects intended for development could be delayed.

Regardless of the challenges associated with public participation, it is the only practical and viable means to give local communities a voice in their governance and in their development.

2.3.2 The Benefits of Public Participation

Deacon and Piper (2006: 2) argue that throughout the world, municipalities have come to appreciate that the relationship between government and the governed, is as important as government itself. They refer to a shift from government to governance. This is the latest form of democracy, overtaking the old representative democracy. This paradigm shift is marked by consultation, involvement and serious consideration of the views of those being governed. Many writers and acts propose similar benefits of public participation.

The National Treasury Guide to Municipal Finance Management for Councillors (2006: 12) states that:
Effective community consultation, or participatory democracy, and developing mechanisms to better engage with communities, is a central theme of the Municipal Finance Management Act. The aim is to create greater community awareness and promote more accountable decision-making processes by government in line with good financial governance principles. The Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003) promotes a participatory, consultative approach to municipal decision-making, and prescribes very specific matters in which a council must formally engage its community. This approach is intended to engender a greater understanding of community needs and promote a system of accountability that will lead to a more autonomous, empowered and responsive council.

Based on the provisions of the Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003), communities are supposed to participate in the municipal budgeting processes and decisions regarding capital projects for the period in question. This is envisaged to not only foster a better understanding of the community needs by the municipality, but to fulfil the constitutional mandate of a transparent and accountable public administration.

The Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation (2005: 1) states why public participation is good for both the community and democracy:

- It is designed to promote the values of good governance and human rights. One of the principles that encapsulate good governance is accountability. The monies and the services rendered by the public sector not only do they belong to the public in the form of tax, but the public are the consumers of government services. So services delivered must meet with the expectations of the consumers. Values of good governance enshrined in the constitution, can only be realized if the affected communities are part of the governance. All over world governments are expected to provide their citizens with services that form part of human rights.
• Public participation narrows the social distance between those who govern and those who are being governed. At local government level ward committee structures are meant to bridge the gaps between government and communities.

• It increases trust. The more the community is aware and involved in the affairs of government or the municipality, the more it will develop trust in the people they have elected. This trust will be translated into goodwill between the parties. They will then work together on many issues and ensure buy-ins by the community on difficult and sensitive issues.

Zimmerman (1986: 3) argues that the following are benefits of participatory democracy:

• It creates awareness of government programmes like the IDP. Not only should the community be aware of major government programmes and projects, it should also be involved in the planning of service delivery programmes.

• The input of the community must never be underestimated. Within communities, there are seasoned, retired and practising experts with a wealth of skills and experience. Some can offer their time, manpower and even resources if requested. However, community members must be fully involved from the planning stages until the end of programmes and not be called upon as a damage control measure when things go wrong. The relationship of the parties involved must be based on good faith and nothing else.

• Citizens will facilitate the implementation of plans and programmes. Government is of the view that, if citizens take part in decision-making, there is a greater chance that they may also take part in ensuring that programmes and projects get started and why they delay or fail, if they do.

• This has a democratic value. It’s easier to hold those elected accountable. By being fully involved in government programmes and processes, the community is
able to monitor the work of government and subsequently hold them accountable.

Ngoma (2004: 286) contends that the above-mentioned benefits overemphasize results of service delivery, rather than the process or the means by which they are achieved. Again, a lack of technical skills is being forwarded as the cause of poor service delivery, rather than the lack of fundamental processes that pave the way for efficiency, effectiveness and accountable government enterprise. Buccus and Mathekga (2009: 11) contend that while the evident problem at local government level can be explained as a matter of poor service delivery, the problem is also perpetuated by the lack of community participation and engagement at local government level. If community members can participate meaningfully in the affairs of local government, they will be the first to know where the stumbling blocks are and work with the municipality rather than fighting it.

2.4 The Ward Committee System in South Africa

This section focuses on the context of ward committees in South Africa and their roles.

2.4.1 The Context of Ward Committees in South Africa

The ward committee system in the context of South Africa emanates from Section 8 of the Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998). Accordingly, ward committees can be set up in category A and B municipalities where the ward committee model is being used. The structure of a ward committee consists of the councillor, who represents the ward and acts a ward chairperson, and a maximum of ten ward committee members.
The most important advantage of ward committees is that they are part of the communities they represent. They know the areas well and they have a greater possibility of having the interest of the communities at heart than outside government officials. This, places ward committees in a better position than any local government structure to facilitate local democracy. However, it should be noted that, subsequent to the Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998), ward committees are mainly advisory structures which can make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward.

2.4.2 The Roles of Ward Committees

According to the Department of Local Government’s Handbook for Ward Committees (2005) the following are the roles of ward committees:

- To ensure that communities are informed and involved in council decisions that affect their lives.
- Increase the participation of local residents in municipal decision-making;
- Should be involved in matters such as the IDP process, municipal performance management, the annual budget, council projects and other key activities and programmes;
- Can identify and initiate local projects to improve the lives of the people in the ward;
- Can support the councilor in dispute resolutions and provide information about municipal operations;
- Can monitor the performance of the municipality and raise issues of concern to the local ward; and
- Can help with community awareness campaigns e.g. waste, water and sewerage, payment of fees and charges.

Municipal councils are constitutionally obliged to support ward committees by, for example; facilitating training, giving financial support and providing publicity for
meetings. Failure by the council to assist ward committees has the potential of reducing them to white elephants and a waste of tax-payers’ money and time.

2.4.3. **Roles of the Ward Councillor**

Each ward committee is chaired by a ward councillor. The ward councilor is mandated to represent the interests of his/her ward in the municipality and in other processes. According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, every citizen who is qualified to vote in the local elections has the right to stand as a candidate in an election for that council. Except a person is disqualified in terms of section 158(1) (a), (c) or (e) of the Constitution. Craythorne (1997: 138) contends that unrehabilitated insolvents, people of unsound mind, those convicted and sentenced to more than 12 months without imprisonment and without an option of a fine, may be disqualified to be a member of the National Assembly. It is not clear whether the above condition applies at municipal level. The assumption is that a person who cannot handle his/her personal finances and has convictions has a big chance of being involved in corrupt and fraudulent activities. The ward councillor should be in touch with the issues in the area, understand the key problems and monitor development and service delivery.

According to the DPLG’s Handbook for Ward Committees (2005), the following are the roles of a ward councilor:

- Is the chairperson of the ward committee;
- Is responsible for convening the constituency meeting to elect ward committee members;
- Is responsible for calling ward committee meetings;
- Is responsible for ensuring that a schedule of meetings is prepared, including: ward committee meetings and special meetings;
• Works with the ward committee to ensure that there is an annual plan of activities;
• Is responsible for ensuring that the ward committee does what the municipality expects regarding reporting procedures;
• Is responsible for handling queries and complaints in the ward;
• Is responsible for resolving disputes and making referrals of unresolved disputes to the municipality;
• Should be involved in all community activities in which the ward committee is engaged; and
• Is responsible for communicating the activities and meeting schedules to the PR councillor.

Ward committee members and the ward councillors ought to have the interests of the communities they represent at heart. The council should support the ward committees in all respects to accomplish their mandate. The members should be committed to their responsibility. However, since the ward councillors are the chairpersons of the ward committees, and are actually being paid to do their job, they should be aware of their responsibilities and rise to the occasion. They must do everything humanly possible to ensure that the communities they represent participate fully in the affairs of the local government and therefore their governance.

2.5 Legislative Framework for Ward Committees

The apartheid system, across all the spheres of government, created countless unfavourable and traumatizing conditions for the African communities, and the local government sphere was no exception. It was at this level where the true nature and extent of separate development and disproportional allocation of resources was most evident. African communities were never part of local governance structures and were never consulted on issues affecting them, as was the case with the White communities. There were, however, some
powerless, ineffective and imposed councilors who were seen as an extension of the apartheid regime. As a result, their houses were petrol-bombed and many were killed. According to Buccus and Mathekga (2009: 14) the post-apartheid South African local government legislative framework inaugurates a new era. The is not only to bring about service delivery, but also to rebuild local communities whose livelihoods have been damaged by the horrendous apartheid system. From the constitution of the Republic to an array of guidelines and by-laws, aimed at democratizing local government and facilitating community participation, were enacted. The following discussion will focus on the legislative framework relating to public participation at the local government sphere.

2.5.1 The Reconstruction and Development Programme

This is a programme that was mooted by the ruling African National Congress in 1994. It was based on the African National Congress election manifesto in 1994. It aimed to achieve the following:

- Empower people to become self-reliant;
- Build local capacity through development support;
- Initiate development programmes and projects on a participatory basis; and
- Address the injustices of the past caused by both colonialism and apartheid.

The success of this programme, to date, is in question because critics argue that not much progress has been made. Instead, studies reveal that, since 1994, the gap between the poor and the rich has widened. It has also been established that most of the projects, undertaken just after the Reconstruction and Development Programme, are not up to scratch in terms quality and reliability.

Most RDP houses are either too small, not plastered, not strong enough, leaking or they only just meet quality standards. The RDP national office was later closed
down. The question is, “Why didn’t the involvement of local communities in these initiatives prevent these disasters?” The answer lies in the nature of this involvement, the powers of the communities, the literacy levels and so on. These communities were and are still disempowered, weak and too illiterate to hold service providers and government officials accountable.

2.5.2 White Paper on Local Government

Though the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 has no extensive discussion on ward committees, it is, however, generally regarded as having set the tone for ward committees. It is basically the first piece of legislation that further epitomized the concept of local government working together with local citizens. The Paper establishes the basis for a new developmental local government system, which is committed to working with citizens, groups and communities.... According to Section 53 to 55 of the White Paper, the public can participate at the following levels:

- As voters – to ensure the maximum democratic accountability of the elected political leadership for the policies they are to promote;
- As citizens – who express, via various stakeholder associations, their views before, during and after the policy development process in order to ensure that the policies reflect the community preferences as far as possible;
- As consumers and end-users – who expect value for money, affordable services and courteous and responsive services; and
- As partners – who can be involved in the mobilization of resources for development.
2.5.3 The Municipal Structures Act

The Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998) may be regarded as the first Bible of ward committees in South Africa. The Structures Act gives a full detail of where, how and what should constitute the structure of ward committees. Chapter 4 of the Act amongst other things spells out the composition, and the election processes of ward committees and presents a framework for their powers and the term of office of members.

According to the Act, ward committees can only be established in Category A and B municipalities. But in 2006 there were suggestion that all municipalities should have ward committees. Most of the discussions regarding the composition of the committee, its roles and its status have been extensively discussed in the previous sections. However, many writers and critics of this structure argue that its legal status compromises its legitimacy, effectiveness and has limited its impact in council decision-making. Across many municipalities and wards, the impact of ward committees on influencing decision-making and redirecting the political discourse appears to be dismal.

Ward committees are advisory bodies that can only make recommendations on matters affecting their wards. To rub salt in the wound, Section 74 (b) spells out that ward committees have such duties and powers as the metro or local council may delegate to them in terms of Section 32.

It is no surprise that at the local government level, there has generally been less progress in capacitating and delegating more powers to ward committees. The reasons for this is the following hypothesis: Local government level politicians and officials consider ward committees as mere outsiders who are meant to intrude in the affairs of the municipality. Their main role is to ensure that they keep communities busy with meetings in order to divert attention from municipal
affairs which have been beleaguered by inefficiency, corruption, nepotism and fraud.

2.5.4 The Municipal Systems Act

The Municipal Systems Act (No. 32 of 200) does not necessarily expatiate on ward committees, except Section 17 (1) implying that they are one of the structures through which the local community can participate in the affairs of local government. Subsequent sub-sections of this Act urge municipalities to develop a culture of governance characterized by the participation of local communities in municipal processes such as:

- The preparation, implementation and review of the Integrated Development Programme;
- The establishment, implementation and review of the performance management systems;
- The budget preparation processes; and
- Other service delivery issues.

According to Section 17 (2) municipalities must take into account the demographics of their population by considering people who cannot read or write, the disabled, women and other vulnerable groups. In this regard, the term Systems Act cannot be more appropriate, as the focus is on the “how” part of matters. This implies that not only should councillors be sympathetic to the needs of the communities they represent, but they ought to have a system intended to gather all relevant information that might form a basis for decision-making. Some municipalities have been alleged to have taken decision, that affect members of the community directly based on presuppositions.
2.5.5 The Municipal Finance Management Act

Though the Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003) does not necessarily make explicit mention of ward committees in dealing with the finances of municipalities, it does dictate that the community must participate in the municipal budgeting processes.

2.5.6 Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees

The 2005 Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees supplement previous legislation by providing uniform guidelines to ward committee members, councillors and officials on the procedures relating to the establishing of ward committees, how they are intended to operate and the conduct of their members. Amongst other things, the guidelines describe the object of ward committees as an independent, advisory, representative and impartial structure that must perform its functions without fear or favour.

The description of ward committees in this manner has the following implications:

- It is a separate legislated entity with its own rules and regulations. It is governed on its own merits and plays a particular role;
- It can only recommend and has no powers to enforce legislation;
- It is elected in order to represent the wishes of its community and must, therefore, be accountable and report back regularly; and
- It must not be partisan or pay allegiance to any other structure or individuals. It must not be unduly influenced or intimidated by any external elements in its decision-making.

According to the guidelines, ward committees are required to meet at least quarterly and hold public meetings regularly. Municipalities must assist ward
committees to perform their functions and their term of office should be no less than two years.

2.5.7 The Role of Ward Committees according to the Department of Provincial Local Government Handbook for Ward Committees

The 2005 handbook defines the roles of ward committees and ward councillors. As the ward committee serves as a link between the community and the municipality, it is supposed to raise issues that concern the community, help in creating awareness on relevant issues and be the eyes and ears of both the municipality and the community. It should also have initiative and be able to explore possibilities to develop the community by being involved in the IDP processes, being involved in dispute resolutions, initiating local projects and the like. The ward councillor is, in essence, the engine that is supposed to drive community participation in municipal affairs. As the chairperson of a ward committee, the councillor must ensure that meetings are held, the community is abreast of municipal issues and resolve disputes that arise. Whether ward committees and ward councilors are doing enough to live up to expectations is the subject of this study. It also analyzes factors that affect their performance.

The guidelines indicate further that a ward committee may express dissatisfaction with the non-performance of its ward councillor in writing to the municipal council. An annual capacity-building and training needs assessment for members of the committee must be prepared, and a capacity development plan with a budget for each committee member must be developed. Accordingly, the guidelines reiterate the principle of equitable representation between men and women. They further emphasize the representation of diverse interest groups, such as the youth, religious groups, sports and culture, health and welfare, business, the environment, education, the elderly. Other items covered include
election procedures, the consideration of geographical representation such as villages and farm clusters. The 2005 handbook for ward committees can be regarded as having fine-tuned previous legislation. Some previous grey areas and shortcomings have been addressed. It should be noted that, very few pieces of legislation can be regarded as flawless, and their development and improvement is a continuous process.

2.5.8 Municipal Policies and By-laws

Municipalities can take the initiative and come up with their own policies to regulate powers, functions and the operation of ward committees.

2.5.9 The Local Government Laws Amendment Act

This is the most recent piece of legislation passed regarding ward committees. The Local Government Laws Amendment Act (No. 19 of 2008) makes a number of changes regarding the governance and functioning of ward committees. Firstly, it dictates that the term of office of ward committees be standardized and aligned to the five-year term of councils. Secondly, it encourages municipalities to make financial provision for the functioning of ward committees, such as the reimbursement of committee members’ out-of-pocket expenses. Such expenses should be allocated from the municipal budget.

The Act brings a fresh, acceptable move of serious and practical means of how ward committees should be supported. Most previous acts were not specific and bold enough in the manner of how municipalities should support ward committees and that constituted a deficiency in the previous acts.
2.6 Summary

This chapter is an in-depth analysis of existing literature on the subject of study. A background analysis of the apartheid local government has been presented. The concept of participatory democracy and public participation and their dynamics have been examined. The post apartheid ward committee structure, its roles and responsibilities have been discussed. The prevailing legislation framework and challenges pertaining to ward committees have been further discussed.
CHAPTER 3

THE WARD COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN THE BUFFALO CITY MUNICIPALITY

3.1 Introduction

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994 the South African government has shown an unwavering commitment to the notion of accountable governance. Public participation is regarded as an integral part of accountable governance. Section 152 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 mandates the local sphere of government to ensure and encourage the participation of local communities in their governance. At the local government level, public participation is effected through the system of ward committees. According to the Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998) ward committees are to enhance the participation of local communities. This is a form of democracy where people, as beneficiaries, participate directly not only to influence the direction of planning, but also to benefit from the outcomes.

According to Oldfield (2008) ward committees face critical limitations that impact negatively on their ability to deliver on their mandate. Some of these challenges that limit the effectiveness of ward committees are:

- Structural limits of power;
- the vagaries of councillor and party politics;
- ineffectiveness due to skills constraints; and etc.

3.2 The Geographic and Demographic Profile of the Buffalo City Municipality

This section will be comprises a short presentation of the most relevant and important information regarding the municipality in question.
3.2.1 Location

The Buffalo City Municipality is named after its main river that brings water to its seas. This is one of South Africa’s main tourist destinations. It has beaches, wildlife, vibrant mixed economic activities and cultural diversity. Geographically, the municipality is situated in a relatively central position in the province of the Eastern Cape bordered to the south-east by the long coastline along the Indian Ocean within the boundaries of the Amathole District Municipality.

3.2.2 The Composition of the Buffalo City Municipality

The Buffalo City Municipality has its power base and the seat of its council in the city of East London. The municipality consists largely of three major towns and their surrounding smaller towns: East London, King William’s Town and Bhisho which is the provincial capital. Subsequent to the enactment of the Municipal Structures Act No. 117 in 1998, the Buffalo City Municipality fell under category B municipalities. The municipality has some of the former infamous homeland areas: Mdantsane, Ilitha, Zwelitsha, Dimbaza and their surrounding rural areas. Forming part of the old RSA is Central East London, Beacon Bay and King William’s Town and other surrounding rural areas. Buffalo City’s land area is approximately 2515 square kms, with 68km of coastline. BCM consists of what is referred to as a corridor of urban nodes, peri-urban nodes and rural nodes, stretching from the port city of East London to the east, through to Mdantsane, King William’s Town, Bhisho and reaching Dimbaza in the west. Whilst East London is the primary economic node, the King William’s Town area is the secondary economic node. KWT functions as a Regional Service Centre and, together with Bhisho, is the Provincial Administrative Centre. This is where the seat of the Provincial Government of the Eastern Cape Province is, whilst East London is the dominant economic centre.
3.2.3 Municipal Council

The Buffalo City Municipal Council has 89 Councillors, of which 45 are elected and 44 are Proportional Representative (PR) deployments. In accordance with council typology, as provided for by the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 Section 9 (d), the Buffalo City Council has an Executive Mayoral system combined with a Ward Participatory system. The present Executive Mayor in the year 2010 is Z. Faku-Hobana, who is the executive head of the Council and is supported by a Mayoral Committee.

The Mayoral Committee comprises of the following councillors: Councillor Ald. J Badenhorst (Integrated Development Programme, Budget Policy and Performance Management System); Councillor M. Pango (Local Economic Development, Tourism and Rural Development); Councillor D. Matika (Finance and Budget); Councillor S. Dikimolo (Corporate Services); Councillor Bobo (Housing, MURP and DVIR); Councillor N. Sityi (Development Planning); Councillor S. Tyilo (Engineering and Infrastructure) and Councillor Mbovane (Health and Public Safety). The Council Speaker is Councillor L. E. Simon. The Speaker is the chairperson of Council. Constitutionally, the Council is the supreme legislative and executive authority in the municipality.

3.2.4 Buffalo City Municipality Population Statistics

The recent Community Survey conducted in October 2007 by Statistics South Africa, estimates the total population of Buffalo City to be 724 306, a marked growth from the 2001 census which estimated it to be 701 895. However, the community survey does not provide a breakdown of the population figures per constituent area of the BCM as was done in previous censuses. In the last two censuses the population was broken down as follows:
### Population 2001 & 1996 (Census) Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>1996</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KWT &amp; Surrounds</td>
<td>184 246</td>
<td>183 934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East London Area</td>
<td>204 862</td>
<td>187 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mdantsane Area</td>
<td>168 284</td>
<td>176 483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural South</td>
<td>63 967</td>
<td>62 530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural North</td>
<td>80 536</td>
<td>76 881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>701 895</strong></td>
<td><strong>686 948</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1 BCM Population Statistics  
Source: www.buffalocity.gov.za

### Households 2001 (Census) & 2007 (Community Survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>191 234</td>
<td>208 389</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2 BCM Household statistics  
Source: www.buffalocity.gov.za

### Gender 2001 & 1996 (Census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>1996</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>372 730</td>
<td>362 650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>329 159</td>
<td>324 297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.3 BCM Gender Statistics  
Source: www.buffalocity.gov.za

#### 3.2.5 Budget and Income

The Buffalo City Municipality operates on a budget of R 1, 6 billion for the year 2006/2007. It compares favourably with municipalities of the same size. Amongst the many challenges they face are unemployment and crime. These two curses are presently gripping the whole of South Africa and the whole of Africa. The table below shows the overall annual budget in comparison with other municipalities, and the income distribution for the entire population.
Unemployment is still rife, housing and other services remain challenges and there are quite a number of low-income earners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Revenue Rm</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo City</td>
<td>1546,3</td>
<td>701 890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emfuleni</td>
<td>1466,6</td>
<td>658 421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangaung</td>
<td>1405,6</td>
<td>645 441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rustenburg</td>
<td>792,4</td>
<td>395 540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matjhabeng</td>
<td>776,3</td>
<td>408 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klerksdorp</td>
<td>670,6</td>
<td>359 202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uMhlathuze</td>
<td>643,6</td>
<td>289 190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polokwane</td>
<td>597,8</td>
<td>508 277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbombela</td>
<td>521,5</td>
<td>474 806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drakenstein</td>
<td>498,6</td>
<td>194 419</td>
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<tr>
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<td>498,6</td>
<td>194 419</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.4 BCM Budget and Income statistics Source: BCM MTREF Budget (2006/7 – 2008/9)**

### 3.2.6 Local Context

Buffalo City is one of the key economic hubs of the Eastern Cape Province and is the most important economy in the eastern part of the Province. In 2004 it was estimated that Buffalo City contributed 23% to the total GDP of the Province and provided 19% of the province `s formal employment opportunities. Whilst the importance of Buffalo City’s economy within the region and the province is recognized, it has not performed well recently when compared to the other major cities in South Africa. Buffalo City was the third worst performing city with a
compounded annual growth in GDP of 2.5%, compared to 3.5% for the nine cities.

3.3 **Public Participation in the Buffalo City Municipality**

According to the Ward Committee Resource Book (2005: 10), the following are principles upon which public participation is based:

- bringing citizens more effectively on board when it comes to local governance and development;
- making the government more responsive to the people’s needs and aspirations;
- empowering citizens to fulfil their potential as partners with government; and
- deepening democracy beyond the representative dimension into a more participatory system.

The mandate for public participation at the municipal level in South Africa is rooted in the following important legislative framework; the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 and Chapter 4 of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act of 1998. In the following sub-section public participation pertaining to the Buffalo City Municipality is discussed.

3.3.1 **The Executive Support Services Department**

In the BCM, public participation falls under the Executive Support Services Department. The principal tasks of this department include: the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of special programmes. Issues that are classified as special are those that relate to gender, the youth, the disabled, the elderly and HIV/AIDS. The main role of the department, in relation to the
special groups, is to achieve mainstreaming and to provide administration and logistical support to the Executive Mayor, Speaker, the Mayoral Committee, Chief Whips, council and ward committees.

3.3.2 Ward Committees in the Buffalo City Municipality

All municipalities are mandated to ensure that local communities participate in the affairs of the municipality. They are, therefore, to establish ward committees.

3.3.2.1 The Role of the Council

According to Section 19 (2) of the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 a municipal council must review the needs of the community annually and encourage community involvement. In a municipality the council is the highest decision-making body. It is, therefore, with the council that final accountability lies. In terms of the Buffalo City’s category, its council has conformed with that which the legislation dictates. It has established ward committees and provided them with the basic necessary administrative support to enable them to carry out their responsibilities. Councils are also responsible for ensuring that the public participates in budgetary processes, the development of the municipality’s Integrated Development Plan and the performance management system. The Ward Committee Resource Book, 2005 stipulates that the council also has to ensure that structured feedback between itself and ward committees take place, even to the extent of ensuring that council minutes are circulated to ward committees.
3.3.2.2 The Establishment of Ward Committees

In line with Section 72-78 of the Municipal Structures Act No. 117 of 1998, the Buffalo City Municipality has established a ward committees system. The municipality has 45 wards and the Council has established 45 ward committees. Each ward committee is chaired by a ward councillor. Ward committees have two main functions; to make recommendations on any matter affecting a ward to the ward councillor or through the ward councillor to the council and also to exercise powers and perform duties that may be allocated to it by the council.

Each of the present ward committees in the BCM has ten members. These members were elected by community members at a general meeting early at in 2010. Although ward committees have no formal powers, they are consultative community structures. Their broad mandate includes broadening participation in the democratic processes of the council and to assist the Ward Councillor with organizing public meetings, disseminating information, and encouraging participation from residents in the ward. Ward Committees in the municipality meet on a monthly basis to discuss ward issues.

3.3.2.3 The Functioning of Ward Committees in the Municipality

One of the main responsibilities of ward committees is to hold meetings in order to debate issues regarding each ward. Ward committees have a schedule to follow in connection with meetings. Firstly, once a month they must hold a meeting with a municipal official under the delegation of the Department of Public Participation and Special Programmes. The purpose of these meetings is for the municipality to assess the functioning of ward committees and to inform them about developments, as well as to seek their input. Secondly, the ward committee must convene its own meetings every fortnight. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss current issues and complaints from the community, and to plan major events and discuss whom to invite whenever a need arises. Lastly,
the ward committee needs to report and seek a mandate from the community every quarter.

Ward committees in the municipality do hold their meetings as scheduled. Municipal officials do follow their schedule of attending ward committee meetings. Ward committee members do attend meetings on a regular basis and they contribute freely on issues being discussed.

### 3.3.2.4 Other Structures Ward Committees Work With

The main structures ward committees work with on a continuous basis are Community Development Workers. Each ward has a CDW allocated to it and this person has to work together with the ward councillor. The concept of Community Based Workers is a fairly new initiative in South Africa. It was mooted by the Office of the Presidency in an effort to take government services to the intended beneficiaries, who, for some reason are unable to access them.

These are people employed directly by the Provincial Governments. Their activities are said to be co-ordinated by district municipalities and they are managed by municipalities. They are employed temporarily on a year-to-year basis. These workers are an extension of government departments, reaching those who normally are not reachable. CDWs, as they are commonly known, work with communities to identify problems and concerns and channel these to the relevant departments. They assist needy community members with social grant applications, identity document applications and even organizing food parcels.
3.3.2.5 Ward Committees and the Core Business of the Municipality

- The Integrated Development Planning (IDP)

The municipality

In terms of prevailing legislation including, *inter alia*, Act No.117 of 1998 and Act No. 32 of 2000, the municipality has an Integrated Development Plan that is reviewed on continuous basis. Chapter 5 of the Municipal Systems Act, 2000 stipulates that citizens are to participate in the preparation, implementation and review of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is a process through which municipalities must prepare a strategic development plan which extends over a five year period with input from the communities. This is a broad plan for each municipality that gives an overall framework for development. It is a planning process and an instrument which guides and informs planning, budgeting, management and decision-making processes in a municipality.

In terms of the White Paper on Local Government, 1998 the IDP assists municipalities to achieving their developmental mandate in the following way:

- It enables municipalities to align their financial and institutional resources behind jointly agreed policies and programmes;
- It ensures the integration of local government activities with other spheres of development planning at provincial, national and international levels;
- It serves as a basis for engagement between local government and the citizenry at the local sphere and with the various stakeholders and interest groups;
- It enables municipalities to consider their obligations and systematically prioritise programmes and resource allocations;
- It assists municipalities to focus on the environmental sustainability of their delivery and development strategies; and
- It assists municipalities to develop a holistic strategy for poverty alleviation.

No plan is worth anything unless it is implemented. Governments all over the world, including South Africa, are known for their failure to implement policies and even those that are implemented have a questionable success rate. Municipalities in South Africa have also been found to be failing in many respects when it comes to the implementation of even the most basic of their service delivery responsibilities. The Buffalo City Municipality has, for a long time, had problems with household refuse removal and this amongst other things, has had communities up in arms. In 2010 it has been claimed that the municipality has under-spent its infrastructure grant by up to 60%. One wonders whether all these plans and programmes will change the status quo. Or are these just ideals which will never be realised unless someone is made accountable?

- **The Municipal Budgeting Process**

The municipality is also supposed to involve the communities in its budgetary processes. Public comments as well as the IDP are supposed to influence municipal budgets. There is no known policy or plan in the municipality on how the input of communities is to be received, so as to influence the budget. Ward committees are supposed to assist with the following in the budgetary process:

- budget hearings per ward with specific feedback on ward submissions; and
- outreach to ward committees by joint mayoral and finance committee teams.
3.4 Profiles of Ward 12 and Ward 13

These two wards are part of the broader East London area within the Buffalo City Municipality. Both are former Black townships. Social challenges are rife. These include crime, unemployment, teenage pregnancies, alcohol and substance abuse. The operation of taverns, spaza shops and taxis is the main economic activity for these wards. Service delivery protests, that rocked South Africa not so long ago, have also surfaced and died down here as well. Most people commute to and from work every day using public transport like taxis. Development and the provision of amenities such as libraries, sports fields, swimming pools and even a Post Office are still lacking.

3.5 Ward Committees for Ward 12 and Ward 13

- Ward Committee Members

Both wards have a full complement of ten members. Gender representation is 50% females and 50% males. In both wards the committees are composed of only one race group, namely Africans. The majority of the committee members are older people between the ages of 30-65 who are unemployed. There is a great underrepresentation of young people, the disabled and people from different political parties.

Ward committee members attended training workshops and courses. These were offered in English and committee members seem to have grasped what was presented. It could be the case of our President, who has no actual formal education, but today he is President.
• Skills and Training

The National Ward Committee Guidelines, 2005 identify the following categories of training needs for ward committees:

Generic Training Needs

- Basic literacy
- Communication
- Interpersonal skills
- Conflict management and negotiation skills
- Democracy and community participation
- Identification, monitoring and prioritisation of needs, including basic training in survey methodology
- Leadership

Training Needs on Municipal Policies and Processes

- The establishment, terms of reference, nature and functions of ward committees
- Municipal structures, legislation & processes
- Municipal Service Partnerships
- Payment for services
- Principles of good governance

Specialised Training Needs

- Meeting procedures and secretariat services
- Administration
- Budgeting
- Monitoring and evaluation
Since the councillors have been elected they have attended about five capacity building and training sessions. The Buffalo City Municipality has a policy on newly elected ward committees. After being elected all ward committee members are to attend training organized by the BCM. Earlier in 2010, all elected ward committee members were sent for Ward Committee Training, facilitated by a company called Project Administration Services (Pty) Ltd. A copy of the manual used was made available to me by one of the committee members from Ward 12. An induction ceremony, though late was held for all ward committees and ward councillors. A lot of information, expectations and feedback was given at this ceremony.

3.6 Summary

For true democracy to take place, those who are governed must be able to participate in a meaningful and gainful way. The Buffalo City Municipality has succeeded in establishing ward committees for the purpose of effecting public participation. Communities are being afforded an opportunity to participate in the affairs of the municipality through the ward committees. Development initiatives, poverty alleviation initiatives and other development undertakings are being planned and implemented in partnership with ward committees.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

According to Cano (2009: 1) research is about finding out. Most important is that research is a process of searching for solutions or answers in a systematic manner. It involves a sequential application of appropriate methods and techniques. At the core of the process of research is the methodology which encompasses the tools or the instruments of the actual research. These include a research design, sampling, data collection, data analysis and the formulation and presentation of recommendations.

Neuman (2006: 83) argues that the ultimate purpose of social research is to discover and document universal causal laws. Babbie (1986: 72) presents three purposes of research: exploration, description and explanation. Description is to satisfy curiosity for a better understanding, to test the feasibility of undertaking a more careful study, and to develop the methods to be employed in a more careful study. It is apparent that previous studies, besides being based on interest or curiosity, act as a catalyst for further and more refined research, even on already familiar subjects or phenomena.

The unit of study or analysis can either be human beings, their behaviour, events, or any unit or phenomena. According to Mouton (2009: 51) when the object of investigation is an object in World 1 (a real-life “object”), talk is about empirical research problems. Real life object refers to real social problems such as poverty, health issues and diseases. Individual human beings are perhaps the most typical unit of analysis for social scientific research (NMMU Study Guide). This is due to the fact that whatever the reason is for a study within a
social context, human beings will always be directly or indirectly linked. Research methodology is said to refer to the methods, techniques and procedures that are employed in the process of implementing the research design or the research plan (NMMU Study Guide). Babbie and Mouton (2001: 103) argue that research methodology deals with whom or what will be studied and how information will be collected.

4.2 Research Design

Cooper and Schindler (1998: 130) describe research design as constituting the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. Nachmias and Nachmias (1982: 75) give a more inclusive description than the above. By implication they contend that research design answers the following questions:

- Whom to be studied? - this would refer to your target population or sample, individuals, groupings, places, activities, or objects.
- What to observe? – this could refer to behaviours, characteristics and so on.
- When will observation be made? – this refers to time-frames for the whole study.
- How will data be collected? – this may range from a simple observation to surveys or structured interviews.

The aim of a research design is best described by Mouton and Marais (1992: 33) as to plan and structure a given research project in such a manner that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximized. Whatever the wording is, writers overwhelmingly converge on the point that the research design is the plan or formal framework of how the research process will be conducted.
Quantitative and qualitative approaches are dominant in research. Creswell (1994: 1-2) describes a quantitative approach as an enquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analyzed with statistical procedures in order to determine whether the predictive generalization of the theory holds true. Creswell further defines a qualitative paradigm as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting.

In terms of a quantitative approach, reality is objective and singular, whereas, in a qualitative study, reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants. The quantitative researcher’s relationship is independent from those being researched and values play no role, whilst a qualitative researcher interacts with those being researched with values playing a role. The quantitative researcher’s language is formal and mostly scientific, with the actual process of research being deductive, unlike a qualitative approach where the language is informal, not scientific and where the actual research process is inductive.

The choice of a qualitative approach for this study is based further on fundamental nature which, according to Durrheim, Painter and Terre Blanche (2006: 287) is premised on wanting to make sense of feelings, experience, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world. In the case of this study the natural setting is the ward within which the ward committees are operating. The elected ward councillors, ward committee members and the community members within Wards 12 and 13 form part of this natural setting within the Buffalo City Municipality.

It is imperative to note the following elements for the purpose of this study as it is based on a qualitative paradigm:
• The sample was smaller and less random compared to that of a quantitative research;
• An interactive approach with the respondents was adopted;
• While collecting data sense was made of the experiences and social situations of the units of being studied;
• The actual data collection tool and process were less structured;
• Data analysis is descriptive in nature consistent with a qualitative study; and
• This research was not conducted without consent.

According to Neuman (2005: 15) the following steps should be followed in a qualitative research like this one: acknowledging social self, adopting a perspective, design the study, collect data, analyze data, interpret data and lastly inform others.

4.2.1 Interviews

Neuman (2006: 272) argues that surveys can be used in the following categories: behaviour, attitudes/beliefs/opinions, characteristics, expectations, self-classification or knowledge purposes. For the purpose of conducting this study within the chosen wards, permission to conduct the study was sought in writing from the Municipal Manager of the Buffalo City Municipality. The reason for requesting official permission from the Municipal Manager was that ward committees are legislated municipal structures which are meant to facilitate the participation of local communities within the boundaries of a particular municipality.

Firstly, a literature review on the topic of the study was undertaken. Secondly, a simple observation was made, followed by a participant observation where the
researcher became part of the subject of study and again all professional ethical conduct was observed. Prior to conducting the actual survey telephone calls were made to secure appointments with the respondents, or their representatives. As a means collecting data from respondents questionnaires were used to collect and record the interviewees` responses. Questionnaires, for the ward committee members and for the community members within the said wards, were distributed by the researcher. If respondents needed clarity or assistance, the researcher provided it. In explaining and assisting the interviewer will consciously regard the language, cultural, psychological, economic, educational and political contexts of the interviewees.

4.2.2 Questionnaires

This section will focus specifically on issues relating to the nature and reasons for using questionnaires. According to Fink (2002) a questionnaire is one of the four types of instruments used in survey research. They can either be completely self-administered or assisted. Due to elements like language and education, where necessary, the respondents were assisted.

The questionnaires to be used in this study contain both closed and open-ended questions. Neuman (2006: 287) describes closed-ended questions as questions in which respondents must choose from a fixed set of answers, e.g. Yes or No. With open-ended questions, respondents are free to offer any answer they wish to the question. In the first instance a respondent is limited and is only obliged to answer according to the prescribed format, whereas with the latter, a respondent is free to express his/her opinion and can even expatiate. The inherent disadvantages of questionnaires were minimized by providing assistance as far as possible. The following are some of the reasons for using questionnaires as suggested by many writers, including Neuman:
Questionnaires can be given or mailed to respondents directly,
they are cheap and are able to cover a large number of respondents with minimal effort;
respondents can answer questionnaires in their own time and refer to personal records if necessary; and
depending on interest, the response rate may be high.

4.2.3 Sampling

Cooper and Schindler (1998: 215) explain sampling well by stating that the idea is that by selecting some of the elements in a population, one may draw conclusions about the entire population. A population is the total collection of elements, about which one wishes to make some inferences, whereas a census would be a count of all the elements in a population. Something very fundamental to note about a sample is stated by Labovitz and Hagedorn (1981: 58). A sample is or ought to be representative of the degree to which it reflects the characteristics of the population.

In other words, a sample must reflect, as far as possible, the characteristics of the population from which it is drawn. Issues pertinent to population characteristics are: population size, age, gender, literacy, race and even religion. So in designing a sample, the researcher must ensure consistency with the population demographics or characteristics he or she is studying. For the purpose of this study, were observed as far as it was possible.

4.2.3.1 Sample Selection and Size

On the subject of the sample, Cooper and Schindler (1998: 216) begin by asking a question as to what a good sample. A good sample is one which represents the characteristics of the population it purports to represent. Validity in this regard
would mean that accuracy and precision have been achieved. Labovitz and Hagedorn (1981; 59) argue that representivity is, to some extent, dependent on the degree of precision to which the population is specified. A sample may be comprised of individuals, groupings, institutions, conditions or even events. Qualitative researchers focus on how the sample or small collection of cases, units or activities bring out social life. The characteristics of a sample must reflect the population from which it has been taken. In the choice of a sample, researchers are obliged to take into account elements like distance or proximity, accessibility, time constraints implications or even cost implications.

The sample selected for the purpose of this study was Ward 12 and Ward 13 in the city of East London in the Buffalo City Municipality in the Province of the Eastern Cape. The two wards, used as a sample form part of the townships of the selected municipality. The respondents were the ward councillors, the ward committee members and the community members within the designated wards. This sample was chosen from 45 wards in the Buffalo City Municipality. As per the dictates of The Guidelines for the Establishment and Operations of Ward Committees (Notice 9 of 2005), each ward committee had ten members from the community residing within the designated ward and a ward councillor who acted as a chairperson of the ward committee.

The population of the sample was 450 ward committee members, 45 ward councillors and the broader community members. The total sample was ten ward committee members, a ward councillor from each ward, and 30 community members from both wards. The community members are the people who ought to be aware of the frequency of community meetings called by the ward committee and the kind of work in which they are involved. In other words, the community members are direct and very important stakeholders in this study.

There are elements at play regarding the choice of a sample for any researcher and for every type of research. The choice of these two wards in this case was
based on their proximity or accessibility and familiarity of the area to the researcher. The municipality chosen where the study was undertaken was very big and, therefore, a choice of two wards as a sample was ensured that the study was possible. Covering the whole area would have been impossible. Gender balancing should cater for inherent differing views between different genders on various social and political issues and, therefore, a balanced perspective is aimed at. In total the sample was constituted of fifty two respondents.

4.2.3.2. Sampling Technique

Qualitative and quantitative researchers may approach sampling differently. According to Neuman (2006: 219) there are two types of sampling designs: probability and non-probability sampling. Neuman (219) further states that quantitative researchers use probability sampling the most while qualitative researchers tend to use non-probability or non-random sampling. Cooper and Schindler (2002; 219) contend that probability sampling must provide nonzero chance of selection for each population element. This means that all the demographics and characteristics present in a population must be reflected in a sample. Non-probability sampling focuses less on the representativeness than on how the sample brings out social life. In other words on a non-probability sampling there is no nonzero chance of selection for each population element.

According to Fink (2002: 39) the following are three commonly used non-probability sampling methods: convenience sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling, though other writers include more than these. For the purpose of this study, convenience and snowball sampling were used. Convenience sampling was used in the selection of the ward committee members. The choice of convenience sampling was based on the fact that the researcher could freely choose whoever he/she perceived as befitting the right sample.
Snowball sampling was used for the purpose of selecting the community members. This is a type of non-probability sampling which according to Fink (2002: 41) relies on previously identified members of a group to identify other members of the population. In this case the ward councillors for Ward 12 and 13 were used to identify ward members for their wards, as well as community members. The use of snowball sampling is due to it being relatively convenient, economical and appropriate for use in many surveys.

4.3 Problem Statement

The purpose of this section is to address further the problem as presented in Chapter 1 (see 1.3). According to the Municipal Structures Act (No 11 of 1998) Category A and B municipalities are to be demarcated into wards and also have ward committees chaired by ward councilors. Ward committees, by virtue of being closest to the communities which they represent, are the most strategic vehicle to give meaning to local democracy. Community participation also fosters goodwill and a sense of common purpose between stakeholders and it also encourages buy-ins by communities regarding sensitive issues.

However, there seem to be challenges regarding the efficiency of this institution to live up to expectations. Despite the mandate of the ward committees to bring democracy to the people through participation in their governance, instances of acrimonious relations between municipalities and the community are still prevalent. Violent service delivery protests, reminiscent of the violent apartheid past, have come to haunt us. Ward committee members seem not to be clear about their responsibilities. The above scenario brings into question the success or effectiveness of the ward committees in the Buffalo City Municipality in facilitating local democracy.
4.4 Analysis of the Results

For the purpose of this research Ward 12 and Ward 13 were chosen. The exact sample comprised ten members from each ward committee, two ward councillors and 30 community members. The total sample was made up of 52 individuals.

The empirical study started with a formal observation of the existence and functionality of the ward committees. The next step was the distribution of questionnaires and conducting questionnaire-based interviews (see Annexure C, D and E for questionnaires and interview schedules). The first set was given to the ward committee members, the second to the ward councillors and the third to the 30 community members.

The researcher assisted with the filling in of the questionnaires where necessary. This was necessitated by the low levels of education of some of the respondents as the questionnaires were written in English. This assistance was to ensure the internal validity. All the questionnaires were filled in and returned to the researcher. The following section presents the results.

4.4.1 Formal Observation

Formal observation constituted the researcher being present at two Ward 12 committee meetings and the following observations were made:

4.4.1.1 The Composition of ward committee 12 and 13

Observation to assess the composition of the ward committees was done for both Ward 12 and Ward 13. Both wards have a full complement of ten members
each and a ward councillor as the chairperson. Gender representation is 50% females and 50% males. From the ten members per ward committee, there are five males and five females for each ward committee. In both cases the committees are composed of only one race group, namely Africans.

It can be deduced that the ward committees are properly constituted both in terms of the total number of committee numbers, which is supposed to be ten, and one ward councillor. Gender balance has been achieved. This is a good development as balance is advocated by most prevailing legislation. Ward committees are predominantly constituted according the demographics of each ward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Total number</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>10 + 1</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>10 + 1</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1 The Demographics of Ward Committee Members

4.4.1.2 The Functioning and meetings of ward committees

Formal observation was done for the two ward committees. Both ward committees are functional, in that they do have regular meetings twice a month on Tuesdays. The researcher managed to attend ward committee 12 meetings on three occasions during the process of this research as a seconded representative for our area. Their meetings are surprisingly of a high standard. The meetings had a formal agenda that was read out and time allowed for people to take it down. All 20 members and two councillors own cellular phones that they use for communication purposes.
A brief discussion on the different forms of forwarding apologies was held, as some forwarded sms’s and others called and left voice messages. It was agreed that times have changed and that technology provides for a variety of communication means. It was interesting that the terms Mr. and Mrs./Miss were used when referring to members, as not everybody came the same political party, and also for the sake of professionalism.

Based on the formal observation the following results are presented themselves:

- Ward committees are functioning properly and they hold regular effective meetings where they discuss tangible issues. Key issues being discussed included: development issues, crime and sector policing, youth development issues, liquor and business licensing, and strategies towards ensuring that communities attend ward meetings.
- Both ward councillors control their meetings well. This could be due to the experience gained from being involved in other political party structures.
- Communication between all the members is effective.
- Relations between all the members and the councillors are sound and mutual respect characterized their meetings.

4.4.2 Analysis of Responses from Community Members

The responses from the questionnaires issued to the community members within the wards constitute their perceptions about the ward committees in their area (see Annexure C questionnaires). The questionnaires revealed the following:
4.4.2.1 Community Interest in Ward Committee Meetings

All 30 respondents answered this question. Twenty-eight out of the 30 community members indicated that they had never attended a ward committee meeting and the reason was said to be a lack of interest.

![Bar chart showing community interest in ward committee meetings](chart.png)

It can therefore be deduced the community’s interest in ward committee meetings is generally very low.

4.4.2.2 Understanding the Work or Duties of Ward Committees

Thirty out of the 30 respondents answered this question. Twenty nine of the 30 indicated that they understood the work or duties of ward committees as to ensure housing provision, and to address unemployment and crime. Only one respondent indicated not to know anything concerning the duties of ward committees.
The deduction in this regard is that the community understands the work of the ward committees.

4.4.2.3 Request for Assistance

All 30 respondents answered this question. However, not a single respondent out had ever asked the ward committee for assistance or to solve a problem. The reason forwarded was that they had never thought about it. It could be that the ward committee itself had not made it clear and had invited people to lodge problems with them. Another factor might be the proximity of municipal offices as this is an urban area. It could put people at ease knowing that they have lodged a complaint themselves.
It can be deduced that the community prefers other means of resolving their issues with the municipality rather than via the ward committee.

### 4.4.2.4 Perceptions about Fulfilment of Responsibilities

Thirty respondents responded to this question. All 30 felt that they did not believe that the ward committees do fulfilled their responsibilities. This feeling could be confirmed by the previous response where not a single person had requested the ward committees to solve a problem. They argued that they had heard nothing about the ward committees accomplishing anything and they didn’t see any real change in their areas – no projects, the housing project had ground to a halt years ago and there was no explanation as to when it was going to resume.
The deduction made here is that the community generally does not believe that the ward committees fulfil their responsibilities.

4.4.2.5 Perceptions about Municipal Support to Ward Committees

Out of the 30 respondents, all 30 responded to this question. They do not believe that the municipality is doing enough to assist ward committees to fulfil their responsibilities. The respondents sighted the non-payment of ward committees as the main reason for their answer to this question.
It can be deduced that the community does not believe that the municipality is supporting ward committees to fulfil their responsibilities.

4.4.2.6 Perceptions about Challenges Facing Ward Committees

All 30 residents answered this question. Twenty-nine sighted corruption, fraud and political connections as the main challenges facing ward committees that make them unable to fulfil their responsibilities. One community member did not know about the challenges facing ward committees. The seven respondents believe that if there could be less corruption, there could be success with the work of ward committees.
It can be deduced that the community believes that corruption, fraud and political connections are rife with the ward committees and that these ills work against progress.

4.4.3 Analysis of Responses from Ward Committee Members and Ward

Two sets of questionnaires were designed for both the ward committees and the ward councillors (see Annexure D and E). Each ward had ten ward committee members and a ward councillor. Twenty-two questionnaires were distributed. The structure of a ward committee consists of both the ward committee members and a ward councillor. For the purpose of achieving the objectives of this study the views and responses of the ward councillors have been considered and analyzed in conjunction with those of the ward committee members.
4.4.3.1 Knowledge of Accounting to Communities

All 22 respondents answered this question. All 22 said that they knew that they have to account in terms of their activities to the communities they represent. The general perception emanating from the literature reviewed was that ward committee members and ward councillors seem not to know that they have to account to communities. However this does not seem to hold substance with regard to this sample. Confusion can be prevalent in other wards, but in this case it is not a norm.

It can therefore be deduced that ward committee members and ward councillors are aware that they have to account to the community they represent.
4.4.3.2 Knowledge about Main Responsibilities

Twenty-two respondents answered this question. All 22 respondents indicated that they knew the main responsibilities they had to deal with on a regular basis. The knowledge of responsibilities by both the ward councillors and ward committees is a positive sign, as this means that the rael issues are being addressed.

It can therefore be deduced that ward councillors and ward committee members are quite aware of their main responsibilities.
4.4.3.3 Knowledge of the Code Governing Councillors

All 22 respondents answered this question. Only two respondents had any real knowledge of the Code Governing Councillors. It was the councillors. How will the ward committees question and be able to hold the ward councillors to account, if they don’t know the principles upon which they ought to be governed.

![Chart showing knowledge of Code Governing Councillors]

Based on the responses it can be deduced that ward committee members have no knowledge of the Code Governing Councillors, but ward councillors know about the code.

4.4.3.4 Meeting Attendance by Members

Twenty-two respondents answered this question. All indicated that ward committee members and ward councillors attended meetings regularly. There
were no problems sighted regarding rife absenteeism from ward committee meetings. The reason for this could be the fact that the ward committees under study are in an urban area. Members are close to one another and there is transport available even for short distances.

![Bar chart showing meeting attendance]

From the responses it can be deduced that ward committees are functioning and meetings are well attended by all members.

### 4.4.3.5 Training for Ward Committees and Ward Councillors

Twenty-two respondents answered this question. Both councillors indicated that they had attended about four training sessions. The other 22 respondents indicated that, since elected, they have attended two training sessions. According to all the respondents, soon after being elected in early 2010 they were sent to a Ward Committee Training workshop facilitated by a company called Project Administration Services (Pty) Ltd.
From the responses it can be deduced that ward committee members and ward councillors have been sent to training on more than one occasion.

### 4.4.3.6 Level of Education and Skills

All 22 two respondents answered this question. It has been suggested in many previous studies that ward committees’ effectiveness is constrained by members’ low levels of education, skills and expertise. Councillors and ward committee members do not necessarily have high levels of education, but they have a sound command of English. Out of the 22 respondents only three have Grade 12 or some kind of formal training. About 19 have no Grade 12 or formal training.
It can therefore be deduced that the majority of ward committee members and councillors have low levels of education and this could limit their performance.

4.4.3.7 Influence on Decision-Making

This question was answered by 22 respondents. Nineteen, including the two ward councillors, stated that they did not necessarily influence decision-making. They stated further that decisions were made in the council they were not a part of, so they could not influence decisions taken there. Only three felt that they did have some influence on decisions taken at municipal level.
It can be deduced that ward committee members and councillors do not necessarily have influence on decision-making at the municipal level.

4.4.3.8 Availability of Information

Twenty-two respondents answered this question. All said that important inside information was not made available to them. They, therefore, did not know any better about the Municipal Integrated Development Plan, the budget and other municipal activities. They only knew that which they had to discuss in meetings.
It can be deduced that information is not available to both ward committee members and ward councillors to enable them to make informed decisions.

### 4.4.3.9 The Main Challenge

Twenty-two respondents answered this question. All 20 ward committee members indicated that not being paid for their services was their main challenge. The two ward councillors indicated that the lack of municipal response was their main challenge. It is unclear why there is no meaningful financial reimbursement for those who work at the level closest to their communities. The only form of financial support for ward committee members is a R50 allowance for every meeting attended called by the municipality. Even this comes after the event has taken place and this means unemployed members might need to borrow money to attend meetings when they don’t have any.
The main challenge for the ward committees is the lack of remuneration and, for ward councilors, it is the lack of or slow municipal response.

4.4.3.10 Support from the Municipality

Twenty-two respondents answered this question. All stated that the municipality did not necessarily offer enough support to both ward councilors and ward committee members to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. Items like office space, telephones, faxes and transport are some of the things respondents sighted as the main needs that they would like Municipality to provide. The lack of equipment and facilities was strongly expressed strongly as one of the most important limiting factors inhibiting the performance of ward committees. Legislation compels municipalities to encourage and show the local communities how to participate in their governance. Category B and C municipalities are obliged to establish ward committees and to ensure that they are effective. Municipalities need to do everything within their power to ensure ward committees succeed in facilitating public participation.
It is clear that the Municipality does not give ward committees and ward councillors enough support for them to succeed in their work.

4.4.3.11 Municipal Response

All 22 respondents unanimously indicated that the municipality did not respond quickly enough when requested to attend to community and related queries. All 22 stated that when follow-ups were done the response was always that processes take longer.
Therefore, can be deduced that the municipality’s response is slow when handling complaints from the ward committees.

4.4.3.12 The Relationship with Other Structures

All twenty-two respondents mentioned different local and provincial organizations and structures they work with. Very important partners who work with ward committees in the BCM are Community Development Workers (CDWs). These are people who are employed by the Provincial Government, but are stationed and work within municipalities. Their role is to bridge the gap between the Government and the communities who ought to be accessing services, but for one reason or another they could not. They are deployed mostly in poorer areas and in townships. Working relationships with a host of other structures and formations were confirmed by the 22 respondents and they are: the South African Civic Organization (SANCO), The Local Youth Development Forums and the Sector Policing Forums.
Something to applaud the Buffalo City Municipality for is that, in the greater Buffalo City Municipality, each ward committee has desks chaired by each of the ten ward committee members. These desks include the youth, housing, the Disabled, Business, Sport, Agriculture, Religion, Security, and Health and Social Development. Therefore, in order to initiate or organize initiatives for their communities, they have to work constantly in partnership with these departments either at national, provincial or local government level.

It can therefore be deduced that ward committees do work with other structures and organizations.
4.5 Summary

The focus of this chapter has been the presentation and analysis of a variety of factors that affect the functioning of ward committees in the Buffalo City Municipality. This presentation is of findings as per the responses of the community members, the ward committee members and the councillors of Wards 12 and 13 in the BCM. The following chapter will focus on the presentation of the conclusions and recommendations emanating from the literature reviewed and the empirical findings.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study focused on analyzing various factors which could have an impact in the operation and performance of ward committees in the BCM. In this chapter the conclusions, recommendations and implications, based on the analysis of the findings and the literature review, are presented.

5.2 Findings

This section presents the findings of this study, based on the literature reviewed, and later, will be the empirical study. It is, however, apparent that in spite of the progress made regarding public participation, there are still challenges with regard to the functioning of committees.

5.2.1 Challenges relating to the Functioning of Ward Committees

Functionality refers to the ability of the ward committee to carry out its everyday functions. Smith (2008: 15) contends that some critics of ward committees simply believe that they don’t work. The institution of the ward committee is seen as being faced with a host of functional limitations (Himlin, 2005; Portfolio Committee on Provincial and Local Government, 2003; Piper and Deacon):

- Insufficient quorum for meetings – at times meetings cannot take place due to ward committee members and even ward councillors not attending or arriving very late. The reasons for this are numerous and cannot be overlooked. They
range from vast distances to be travelled even by the elderly, delays by taxis, inclement weather to those without cars and family responsibilities, especially for women, who are expected to take care of household chores. The argument of the vastness of some of the wards leading to functionality problems is also forwarded by Napier (2008: 173). He contends that, with reference to the Tshwane Municipality, a ward can be anything between 12,000 and 20,000. However, Napier’s argument is based on the problem of heterogeneity of such a large area to be able to function properly. By implication Napier believes that a ward committee should be constituted of homogeneous characteristics like class, race, and other socio-economic attributes. This argument does not find favour as it would take us back to the apartheid days of separate everything. Who would assist in solving certain problems and offer resources like phones, faxes and computers if the people in informal settlements, as a homogeneous group, are to be grouped alone. Such an argument would not solve the ward committee problem, it would perpetuate the evil of a class based society, rather than a united community regardless of social disparities;

- No clear Terms of Reference for committees – there are no clear guidelines or sources of reference for committee members in terms of what, how and where to go when handling problems and this leads to ad hoc responses to the matter;
- Poor working relationships – it is normal that, at times, there will be differences of opinion amongst people who work together, but in certain instances this escalates into sour relations and competition between ward committee members and even the councillor. This leads to divisions and stalls all would-be progressive engagements in ward committee meetings. At times, ward committee members are accused of aspiring to be councillors and, as a result they may orchestrate campaigns to discredit councillors in order to dispose of them;
- Lack of sufficient administrative and financial support and other resources – these lead to the administrative aspect of ward committees being inadequate;
- Minutes not being taken - due to the disorganized nature of some of the ward committees, even minute taking and storage is an effort; and
- Two years or less term – the term of office for ward committees is two years instead of five years like the councillors. This does not only result in loss of experience and gained knowledge, it also results in new members having to start
all over again and learning about everything. This does not only stall progress, it also leads to the waste of time and money on frequent training for new committee members.

If not all, most of the above functional limitations, are rather familiar and could be regarded as the most obvious inherent in social structures and set ups.

5.2.2 The Lack of Power of the Ward Committee Structure

Smith (2008) argues that although the Municipal Structures Act (NO 117 of 1998) makes provision for municipalities to delegate certain powers and duties to ward committees, it would appear that few municipalities have done this. Piper and Deacon (2006: 5) contend that, due to the fact that ward committees are only advisory bodies and meetings are chaired by ward councillors, they do not necessarily affect decision-making. They argue further that ward committees only deliberate over issues, but never actually take decisions. That is the duty of the council only.

In an effort to show the imbalance of forces in the ward committee structure between the committee members and the councilor, the following analysis is based on five normative criteria for political equality by Dahl (1998: 37):

- Effective participation – members have equal and effective opportunities for making their view known. However, ward committees do not deliberate at council meetings;
- Equality in voting - decisions in the council are taken by way of voting. Ward committees have no voting powers and, therefore, do not directly affect decision-making;
- Gaining enlightened understanding – ward committees are excluded from accessing enlightening information. Poor municipal communication
strategies are also an inhibiting factor in ward committees accessing enlightening information. Ward committees do not necessarily have access to municipal planning processes and budget information is normally in highly technical formats. It is rarely packaged in such away as to provide useful information on budget allocation at ward level (Smith 2008: 16);

- Control of the agenda – it is known that the ward councillors are the ones who chair ward committee meetings and are already accused of party political and personal manipulation, so they control the agenda to their liking; and

- Inclusion of adults – the Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Ward Committees of 2005 suggest the diversity of interest groups that should be included in the composition of ward committees; the youth, religious groups, sports and culture, health and welfare, business, environment, education, older persons etc

Unless all the stakeholders at local government level enjoy equal status, the notion of transparency, accountability and meeting the direct needs of communities will never be realized and democracy will suffer a setback. Within this argument, the limitation of decision-making and access to information have been covered.

5.2.3 Ward Committees’ Inability to Influence Decision-Making

At an inauguration ceremony in 2010 in Buffalo City the mayor emphasized that ward committee ought to determine the council agenda. Napier (2008: 174) argues that municipal processes tend to be highly bureaucratized and elaborate and the outputs eventually made are not always traceable back to those who needed them. The above scenario, according to Napier, has serious implications about the ability of ward committees to make decisions for the advantage of
those they represent. This ineffectiveness of ward committees in the decision-making processes might be attributed to the lack of interest in committee members and lack of faith in communities as they never see what ward committees actually change.

5.2.4 Skills/Education Levels of Ward Committee Members

According to Buccus and Mathekga (2009: 14) the post-apartheid South African local government legislative framework introduced a new era, that is not only aimed at bringing about service delivery, but also to rebuild local communities whose livelihoods have been damaged by the horrendous apartheid system. One of the structures, established in order to facilitate democracy at local government sphere, is the ward committee. However, there seem to be challenges regarding the efficiency of this institution. Smith (2008: 14) argues that the effectiveness of ward committees is constrained by limitations of the ward councillors` low levels of education, skills and expertise. According to Smith, this results in ward councillors being unable to interpret legislation, follow council proceedings and even being unable to articulate the concerns of the communities they represent. Accordingly, the ability of the councillors to effect better service delivery for the communities they represent is compromised.

A skills audit of 373 ward committee members in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality carried out by the Project for Conflict Resolution and Development in 2008 (Bendle, 2008) found that only 9% had any post-matric training or qualification and 30% did not have a matric qualification. These are results from a metropolitan municipality. It is likely that the education profile of ward committee members in more rural municipalities will reflect even lower education and skills levels. The picture painted above is a bleak one, a less educated or trained councillor cannot operate to his/her full potential, service delivery is slowed down and the community`s direct needs are not met. Reddy and
Sikhakane (2008: 683) extend the challenge of low literacy levels as a serious problem to participatory democracy in the broader community. They argue that low literacy levels have meant that the local population cannot comprehend some of the issues and technical aspects of decisions taken and also cannot make meaningful contributions.

5.2.5 Voluntary Participation in Ward Committees

To date the participation of ward committee members in the ward committee structure is voluntary. According to Reddy and Sikhakane (2008: 683) the voluntary participation which is time-consuming and requires individual commitment on the part of the citizens, of which many are unemployed and aspiring for employment, create expectations for employment possibilities. The situation is worsened by the fact that professionals are reluctant to participate on a voluntary basis although ideally, professionals with specific skills and knowledge could add value to their areas of expertise if they were to participate. In a conference of the South African Local Government Association, held in Johannesburg in 2008, it was proposed that there should be some kind of a payment for ward committee members. This was proposed in the light of the obvious reluctance and evident lack of interest by community members in general dedicating time, effort and, at times, personal resources to a non-paying structure.

5.2.6 Limitation of Funding and Resources

This section focuses on the lack of financial reimbursement and resource provision for ward committees. This is also regarded as one of the most significant impediments in the performance of ward committees. Very few municipalities seem to have allocated some kind of a budget for the operation of
ward committees. Even those who have done so appear to have done so out of responsibility rather than out serious acknowledgement and consideration of the value that ward committees add to the greater governance of municipalities. The above perception is based on the limited amounts budgeted. A lack of or limited budgets result in training, transportation and other resources like office space, stationery and cell phones for everywhere communication are in short or no supply at all. This would definitely compromise the effective functioning of ward committees.

5.2.7 Relationship of ward committees with other structures

This refers to the supposed working relationship of ward committees with other local relevant structures. Even before the ushering in of the present dispensation and its progressive legislative framework, epitomizing democratic and accountable governance, there were several other social structures and events through which people interacted. Mathekga and Buccus (2006: 12) rather present a more moderate critic by stating that “most municipalities have come to rely solely on ward committees as the only legitimate conduit for engaging community members”. People in townships used to interact through street committees, women’s groups, stokvels, during funerals and even sporting events.

It is correct for Mathekga and Buccus to apportion the blame of relying mainly on ward committees to municipalities rather than on the legislation. As the Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Ward Committees of 2005 suggest, the diversity of interest groups should be included in the composition of ward committees: the youth, religious groups, sports and culture, health and welfare, business, the environment, education, the elderly etc. The guidelines seem to indicate that, in the main, the government has realized and is prepared to rectify some of the limitations and anomalies identified regarding ward committees.
Ward committees are now also encouraged to work closely with Community Development Workers (CDWs) who are employed by the provincial departments. They are employed to help communities access government services like IDs, social grants, food parcels, etc. The CDWs are not there to compete with ward committees, but to complement each other as their partners in service delivery.

5.3 Conclusion and Implications

After having collected data and analyzed the findings the following conclusions have been drawn in relation to the factors affecting the performance ward committees in the Buffalo City Municipality:

- Ward committees are functional, properly constituted, meetings are of a good standard, relationships between members and ward councillors are sound and they handle tangible issues on behalf of the communities;
- The terms of office for ward committee members and ward councillors are different and this has the potential to compromise continuity and the enhancement of knowledge and experience gained over the years;
- Though the communities understand the role of ward committees, they have no interest and faith in them. The communities think that members of the ward committees are corrupt and too politically connected;
- Ward committee members and ward councillors know that they have to account to the communities they represent. They are aware of their roles and responsibilities towards the community;
- Ward committee members are not aware of the Code Governing Councillors and that means they would be unable to hold ward councillors accountable. However, ward councillors are aware of the code and that means they would conduct themselves accordingly;
Since elected ward committee members and ward councillors have received training for more than one occasion to prepare them for their work and this would also ensure that they do not fail in discharging their responsibilities;

An overwhelming number of ward committee members and ward councillors have low levels of education. Though this has the potential of limiting their abilities to perform their functions, in this case no such evidence has been established;

Lack of remuneration of ward committee members is regarded by the members as their most predominant challenge that affects their morale negatively;

Ward committee members and ward councillors do not influence decision-making and this means they have less chance of lobbying to the benefit of the communities they represent;

Ward committee members and ward councillors do not have access to relevant information on municipal programmes and activities;

The Municipality does not give ward committee members and ward councillors enough support (office space, telephones, faxes etc.) and that compromises their operations;

The Municipality responds very slowly when requested to intervene or to solve a problem and that negatively affects the morale of ward committees members, ward councillors and the communities at large negatively; and

Ward committee members and ward councillors do work with a variety of other structures on developmental issues.

5.4 Recommendations

Prevailing legislation *inter alia*, Section 6 of the Municipal Systems Act (No. 32 of 2000) mandates the municipal administration to be responsive to the needs of
the local community, promote a culture of public service and accountability among the staff and enhance co-operation and communication between it and the local community. In view of all the above discussions, municipalities ought to do everything in their power to ensure that ward committees succeed in facilitating public participation and it is in that context that the following recommendations are made:

- The term of office for ward committee members and ward councillors should be the same for the purposes of continuity and enhancing the knowledge and experience gained over the years;
- The Municipality must ensure that intensive campaigns and programmes are launched to create community interest and faith in the ward committees;
- The Municipality, together with all other relevant stakeholders, must develop a scorecard to measure the performance of ward councillors and ward committees in general;
- The Municipality must take responsibility and put in stringent measures to detect and curb corrupt practices by ward councillors and in ward committee structures in general;
- The training offered to ward committee members must include the Code Governing Councillors so that members are able to hold ward councillors to account when they conduct themselves inappropriately;
- It is recommended that better qualified ward councillors and ward committee members be preferred over lesser qualified ones, as they stand a better chance of making progressive contributions and making more informed decisions for the betterment of communities;
- The Municipality must provide a meaningful budget for the remuneration of ward committee members and the provision of facilities and equipment necessary to effect public participation;
• The Municipality must take practical steps to involve ward committee members and ward councillors in the decision-making processes as they would represent the interests of local communities;
• Relevant information regarding the IDP, the budget, and other municipal programmes and activities should be made accessible to ward committee members and ward councillors for them to be able to make informed decisions.
• A detailed procedure on how the Municipality is to respond and make follow-ups in addressing queries referred by ward committees, ward councillors and even the communities, must be developed and implemented as a matter of urgency due to the high levels of frustration with the whole system.

If the Buffalo City Municipality wants to give essence to the ideals of the Freedom Charter adopted in 1955 “The people shall govern”, it is the opinion of the researcher that it should seriously consider the findings and implement the recommendations from this study.
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**Legislation**


Buffalo City Municipality – http://www.buffalocity.gov.za
ANNEXURE A

LETTER TO THE MUNICIPAL MANAGER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY
The Municipal Manager
East London Municipality
Oxford Street
East London

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am currently registered for the degree of Masters in Public Administration at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. One of the requirements for the completion of my studies is a treatise/research with the following topic:

AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF WARD COMMITTEES IN THE BUFFALO CITY MUNICIPALITY IN THE PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE

The main aim of the study is to find out the challenges faced by ward committees. Permission is hereby sought to conduct this research within the municipality. The research will be conducted in Ward 12, Ward 13 and Ward 14. Participants to the study will be composed of ward committee members from the three wards and three ward councillors. The collection of information will entail; reviewing relevant government legislation and municipal documents, observation
of the functioning of the ward committees; distributing Questionnaires to the participants. Participants will write down their responses on the questionnaires and leave out those questions they are not willing to answer. The research will be conducted outside the working times of the respondents, at their places of residents. Participation to the study will be voluntary with an option of withdrawing at any stage of the process if and when a participant decides.

Ethical values and acceptable research principles will be taken into account. Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured and information gathered will not be used to the disadvantage of any participant. Participation in the study might contribute in ensuring that ward committees work better in order to ensure a good understanding and common goal within the broader municipality. Findings will be made available to all stakeholders.

Your assistance will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

...............  
Thandisizwe Henna

Comments/ Recommendations of the Municipal Manager


Approved/ Not Approved

Signature___________________  
Date_______________________
ANNEXURE B

LETTER TO THE WARD COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE WARD COMMITTEE INVITING THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY
Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY

I am currently registered for the degree of Masters in Public Administration at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. One of the requirements for the completion of my studies is a treatise/research with the following topic:

**AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF WARD COMMITTEES IN THE BUFFALO CITY MUNICIPALITY IN THE PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE**

The main aim of the study is to find out the challenges faced by ward committees preventing them from fulfilling their mandate. I hereby invite you to participate in the study. The collection of information will entail; reviewing relevant government legislation and municipal documents, observation of the functioning of the ward committees; distributing Questionnaires to the participants. Participants will write down their responses on the questionnaires and leave out those questions they are not willing to answer. The research will be conducted outside working times,
at your place of resident. Participation to the study will be voluntary with an option of withdrawing at any stage of the process if and when a participant decides.

Ethical values and acceptable research principles will be taken into account. Anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured and information gathered will not be used to the disadvantage of any participant. Participation in the study might contribute in ensuring that ward committees work better in order to ensure a good understanding and common goal within the broader municipality. Findings will be made available to all stakeholders.

Your assistance will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

..........................
Thandisizwe Henna

Comments/ Recommendations of the Ward Councillors

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Approved/ Not Approved

Signature_____________________

Date__________________________
ANNEXURE C

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS
QUESTIONNAIRE A

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Where it is applicable mark yes or no or you can leave blank

1  To which ward do you belong?
   --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

2  Do you attend ward committee meetings regularly?  Yes/No

2.1  If not, why?
   --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

3  In brief mention some of the main duties of ward committees.
   --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4  Have you ever requested your ward committee to solve a problem for you?  Yes/ No

4.1  Was the problem solved satisfactorily or never?  Solved/ Never

4.2  If your previous answer is never, what would you suggest as a reason?
   --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

5  Do you believe that the ward community in your area is fulfilling its mandate?  Yes/ No

6  Do you believe that the municipality is doing enough to assist the committee to do its work?
6.1 Give a reason for your previous answer

7 According to your observation mention things that you think are a challenge, preventing the committee from fulfilling its mandate?

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7.1 What can you suggest that would ensure that ward committees live up to what is expected of them?

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Thank you for your participation and valuable contribution in this study
ANNEXURE D

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS FOR THE WARD COMMITTEE MEMBERS
QUESTIONNAIRE B

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS FOR WARD COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Where it is applicable mark yes or no or you can leave blank

1  To which ward committee do you belong?
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------

2  As the ward committee to whom are you accountable?
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------

3  As the ward committee mention some of your most responsibilities.
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------

4  Are you familiar of the Code Governing Councillors  Yes/No

5  Does the ward committee hold its meetings regularly?  Yes/No

5.1 Is the attendance of meetings by ward committee members and the ward councillor satisfactory?  Yes/No

6  Since you were elected have you received any training?  Yes/No

6.1 If your answer to the previous question is Yes mention how many times and what topics were covered.
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------
What is your highest level of education, including relevant skills received through training?

Do you believe that ward committees influence decision making in your municipality?

Do you believe that as a committee you have enough information concerning the IDP, budgetary issues and other municipal activities to be able to make informed decisions?

What would you consider as the main challenges facing ward committees?

Do you believe that the municipality is giving ward committees the necessary support to fulfill their mandate?

For you to be able to fulfill your responsibilities what kind of support would you like the municipality to give to you?

Does the municipality respond quick enough when you have reported a problem or lodged a complaint?

What is normally forwarded as the main reason for the slow response?
11 Which other structures within the municipality do you work with?

Thank you for your participation and valuable contribution in this study
ANNEXURE E

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS FOR WARD COUNCILLORS
QUESTIONNAIRE C

SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS FOR WARD COUNCILLORS

Where it is applicable mark yes or no or you can leave blank

1 For which ward are you a councillor?
________________________________________________________________________

2 As a ward councillor to whom are you accountable?
________________________________________________________________________

3 Mention some of your responsibilities?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4 Are you familiar with the Code Governing Councillors  Yes/No

5 As part of the ward committee, do you regularly hold meetings?  Yes/No

5.1 Is the attendance of meetings by yourself and ward committees members satisfactory?  Yes/No

6 Since you were elected as a ward councillor have you received any training?  Yes/No

6.1 If your answer to the previous question is Yes, mention how many times and what topics were covered.
________________________________________________________________________
7. What is your highest level of education, including relevant skills received through training?

8. Do you believe that you are to influence decision making in your municipality? Yes/No

8.1. Do you believe that as a committee you have enough information concerning the IDP, budgetary issues and other municipal activities to be able to make informed decisions? Yes/No

9. What would you consider as the main challenges facing ward councillors and ward committees? Yes/No

10. Do you believe that the municipality is giving ward councillors the necessary support to fulfill their mandate? Yes/No

10.1. For you to be able to fulfill your responsibilities what kind of support would you like the municipality to give to you? Yes/No

10.2. Does the municipality respond quick enough when you have reported something or lodged a complaint? Yes/No

10.3. What is normally forwarded as the main reason for the slow response?
11 Which other structures within the municipality do you work with?

Thank you for your participation and valuable contribution in this study