An assessment of the effectiveness of Public Consultation: The case study of selected ward committees in the Northern Areas, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Public Administration in the Faculty of Arts, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

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January 2011
DEDICATION

I dedicate this treatise to my late grandmother, Bettie Arends, who has passed away on 25 December 2006. May the God Almighty rest her soul.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family, friends and colleagues for their support during my studies. A special thanks needs to be directed towards my study supervisor, Ms J SteynKotze who has given me the needed direction, support and advice.

Darrin Arends
DECLARATION

I, Darrin Arends hereby declare that:

- The work in this dissertation is my own original work,
- All sources used or referred to have been documented and recognized, and
- To the best of my knowledge, this work has not been previously authored or submitted to any institution of higher learning.
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ABSTRACT

Since 1994, the South African local government has been obligated to consult with its citizenry in respect of the processes of relating to service delivery. The South African Government has developed a wide range of legislation that ensures that communities are consulted on a continuous basis with regard to how services need to be rendered. Communities have a right to be consulted and to give input into issues affecting them.

Public consultation as envisaged in the South African legislation has, however, not yielded the desired results which is evident in the spate of service delivery protests over poor or non service delivery. Therefore, this study seeks to analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of public consultation in the Northern Areas of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

The researcher used qualitative research methods since it would provide the reader with more insight into how public consultation is implemented in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. The communities, senior municipal officials, and councillors have been interviewed in a structured manner and a content analysis has been made of the minutes of the ward committees in the Northern Areas, the annual reports of the Municipality's Oversight Committee and a range of other reading material.

A number of findings has been made during this research project with the most pertinent being the non-compliance to certain sections of legislation by the Municipality. The communities in the Northern Areas generally felt that efficient and effective public consultation would reduce the number of service delivery protests in that part of the Municipality. A number of interventions need to be made by the political leadership with regard to public consultation and more resources need to be committed towards those processes.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, ward committees have not been functional since 11 September 2009 as their terms had come to an end. This is problematic in that ward committees are regarded as the vehicle through which municipalities and communities engage in municipal decision-making processes (Hicks 2006: 1). Hicks further observes that in most municipalities in South Africa where ward committees are functional, their interaction with communities are marked by uncertainty, in severe cases, chaos. A possible reason is ineffective communication and a lack of direction from political leadership within the ward committees. Hemson (2007: 14) argues that the functioning of ward committees in terms of encouraging citizens into public participation and achieving effective representation is debatable. The author further states that at the izimbizos there are frequent allegations that ward committees are inoperative or paralysed by local contestations. Therefore, it could be argued that the current model that guides the operation of ward committees is not suitable, and as such does not improve the lines of communication between local government and local communities.

Moodley (2007: 4) is of the view that it is now a legislative imperative that citizens are actively involved in the governance process. This has prompted local authorities throughout the country to change the previously dominant mindset, which viewed community consultation and participation as a tiresome burden that slowed down delivery and had merely to be factored into, or added onto the strategy-making process. Therefore, municipal officials need to change the way they view public participation and should welcome the benefits that can be derived from the processes since communities can also make meaningful contributions in respect of the level of services to be rendered and challenges that need to be addressed.
Hemson (2007: 14) thus observes that “even though public accountability of municipal officials through participation is required by law, the practice is very much the exception rather then the rule”. In this sense, many concerns raised by communities at the public consultation meetings get lost in the administrative processes and consequently are not addressed. It is also unclear whether the reports emanating from public meetings are distributed throughout the municipal directorates and are made available to communities.

There are increased costs and energy required to determine who to involve in the public participation process. Hicks (2006:1) concludes that citizen participation in municipal decision-making is often merely elite participation through non-governmental organisations and other organised civil society and interest groups who have access to the necessary resources. It is in this light that this study is undertaken. This study seeks to determine the inclusivity of stakeholders by the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality with regard to public participation and consultation using the Northern Areas as the research nucleus. The Northern Areas are situated on the northern part of Port Elizabeth and stretches from Korsten to Booysen Park. It is predominantly inhabited by coloureds but there are Africans who reside mostly in the KwanoQolo, Timothy Valley and Chatty Extensions. There are 9 wards in the Northern Areas, i.e. Wards 10 (Gelvandale), 11 (Schauderville), 12 (Malabar), 13 (Helenvale), 32 (Cleary Estate), 34 (Arcadia), 35 (West End), 38 (Bloemendal) and 41 (Booysenpark). The ward councillors’ offices are indicated in brackets. Wards 13, 32 and 38 have African National Congress (ANC) elected ward councillors and the rest of the wards elected the Democratic Alliance to serve their interests in the service delivery process of the Municipality. Please refer to Appendix 1 for a map of where the Northern Areas are situated in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

The purpose of this project is to investigate the effectiveness of the public participation and consultation process in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality with communities in the Northern Areas. Emphasis will be placed on what is
being done with the information gathered from meetings with the communities and how the concerns of communities are being addressed by the municipal officials.

The researcher made an observation that there is a reluctance by the political leadership to make adequate funding available for public participation since there is a huge infrastructural backlog, among other, in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality which needs to be addressed and therefore enjoys the bulk of the budget allocations. Indeed, Moodley (2007: 4) noted that “…delays, increased costs and the energy required in determining who to involve...are often cited as factors that militate against active participation of stakeholders in collaborative governance”. The role of the Municipality is to use its resources, and annually allocate funds in its budget, as may be appropriate, to develop capacity and to achieve effective community participation in matters of local governance as required by Section 16 (1) (b) and (c) of Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998.

1.1    Rationale and Motivation

While there are municipalities in the country, for example the Cape Town Municipality, which have become pockets of excellence in the local sphere of governance, Local Government in South Africa, in general, has for some time been in distress, often regarded as severely challenged (Carrim 2009). Most municipalities have been unable to effectively perform their core functions, resulting in communities progressively losing confidence in government. The situation has continued for the past 15 years, with service delivery protests becoming the expression of the public’s discontent with government, especially in the Eastern Cape and the Limpopo Provinces. It could therefore be stated that public consultation and participation is a crucial vehicle that could be used as a

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means to minimise or even eliminate service delivery protests at the local government level.

Participatory governance is not representative democracy, understood as the regular election of councillors, but refers to the manner in which municipalities govern between elections. More specifically, it refers to a set of structural and procedural requirements to realise what the Local Government Municipal Structures and Systems Acts term community participation in the operation of local government. Thus, community participation, more widely termed public participation at other levels of government, is one of the objectives of the legislation and participatory governance is the mechanism through which this is to be realised (Piper and Deacon, n.d). Therefore this study seeks to examine the manner in which the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality governs its affairs in relation to ensuring transparency and accountability with the communities within the Northern Areas.

Fox and Meyer (1995: 20), quoted in Kakumba and Nsingo (n.d.), define citizen/community participation as “the involvement of citizens in a wide range of administrative policy-making activities, including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects in order to orient government programmes toward community needs, build public support, and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within society”. Therefore this study conceptualises public participation as intrinsic to how local government operates as communities need to be actively involved in the decision-making process so as to make the delivery of services more effective and efficient.

Section 152 (1) (b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, holds that the object of local government is to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities. To this end, all municipalities have a constitutional mandate to engage in extensive participation and consultation with the public. Section 16 (1) of the Local Government Municipal
Systems Act 32 of 2000, prescribes that “a municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance, and must for this purpose encourage, and create conditions for, the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality”. Therefore, municipalities are required to ensure that an adequate staff component exists within the institutions that would drive the public participation and consultation process.

The Ward Committees 2nd Booklet (2005) holds that the South African Constitution commands municipalities to involve communities and community organisations in matters of local government and to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities. Ward committees are therefore established as structures to enhance participatory democracy as provided for by the White Paper on Local Government and Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, as amended. The involvement of communities in matters of local government should therefore be viewed as a right and not a privilege. However, this does not imply that communities should interfere with a municipal council’s right to govern and exercise the executive and legislative authority of the municipality (Section 16 (2) Municipal Systems Act of 2000). Therefore, ward committees can be viewed as advisory bodies which recommend the need and level of services to be rendered in a specific community to the political and administrative authorities. Legislation thus requires all municipalities to ensure that processes are put in place to ensure that the provisions as per legislation are provided for with regard to public participation and consultation. The ANC-led South African government has made a deliberate choice to make participatory democracy a matter of fundamental law which is a positive phenomenon for democracy and must be sustained.

1.2 The need for Public Consultation and Participation

Moodley (2007: 4) notes that participation can be a powerful tool to help everyone understand the complexity of development problems and the need for devising
integrated responses to difficult challenges. Therefore, the municipal decision-making process would be simplified by communities understanding the developmental processes. Their inclusion in the decision-making process would also lead to a reduction in public protests since the developmental agenda for a specific municipality would be driven and accepted by its community.

Buccus, Hemson, Hicks and Piper (2007) state that “the 2005 Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation states that public participation ‘could be promoted in order to make development plans and services more relevant to local needs and conditions’ (development), ‘in order to hand over responsibility for services and promote community action’, (state-building) and ‘to empower local communities to have control over their own lives and livelihoods’ (democracy)”. To this end, municipal services would be tailored towards the specific needs of the communities and by taking part in the decision-making process; they would own or relate to development taking place.

Buccus et. al., (2007) continue that “experience shows that the ‘external expert stance’ does not generate social change, whereas the participatory stance does...this is because of the ‘social learning’ that stakeholders generate and internalise during the participatory planning and implementation process”. In addition, they also comment that local stakeholders are often more committed to the development of their own communities than external experts and thus have a tendency to develop more appropriate institutions through the participatory process. Therefore, if one takes the policy-making process as an example, one finds that municipalities tend to use external expertise to first draft a policy and thereafter this draft product would be taken to communities for comment. This approach narrows the content of discussion around a policy since communities
would focus on what they see in front of them and not at the holistic picture, as they were not involved from the beginning of the policy-making process.

One can thus argue that local governments would be more successful if they commit themselves to teamwork with local communities from the onset of the policy-making process. All stakeholders in a municipality, including councillors, traditional leaders, officials, communities, the private sector and all structures of government, must work together as partners in the transformation process geared towards the empowerment and development of communities as envisaged in the ANC documents around participatory governance.²

Brynard (1996: 44) as quoted by Kakumba and Nsingo (n.d.) identifies the following functions as the objectives of citizen participation:

1. Provide information to citizens;
2. Get information from the citizens;
3. Improve public decisions, programmes, projects, and services;
4. Enhance acceptance of public decisions, programmes, projects, and services;
5. Alter political power patterns and resource allocation;
6. Protect individual and minority groups rights and interests; and
7. Delay or avoid complicating difficult public decisions.

From the above, it can be deduced that the participation and consultation of the public is a give and take process whereby municipalities provide information in a draft format with a view to amending the said information. The Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and budget, for instance must be developed in accordance with the needs and priorities of communities. This study would therefore attempt to assess what the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality does with

information obtained at public meetings held in the Northern Areas with regard to improving the delivery of services in that community.

In the White Paper on Local Government (1998), it is pointed out that the ‘Batho Pele’ (‘People First’) principles provide a useful approach to building a culture and practice of customer service. Consultation in this context means that ‘citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of public service they receive, and, where possible, should be given a choice about the services which are provided’ (White Paper on Local Government, 1998). The aforementioned highlights the South African Government’s commitment towards public consultation even to an extent where the public is given options in terms of what level of service is to be rendered. Therefore, this study would seek to ascertain to what extent the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality consults with communities in the Northern Areas and whether it is effective.

In the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (2009), it is stated that “an ideal municipality in our system will strive to contribute to building the Developmental State in South Africa and draw from the constitutional and legal framework established”. An ideal municipality, amongst others, would

(a) Provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
(b) Be responsive to the needs of the local community; and
(c) Encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.

The abovementioned principles are the cornerstone of good governance by municipalities and need to be adhered to in the effort to improve service delivery at the grassroots level. Both the Provincial and National Government

1 There are eight Batho Pele principles which are consultation, setting service standards, increasing access, ensuring courtesy, providing information, openness and transparency, redress, and value for money. These principles align service provision with the ideals expressed in the Constitution, 1996.
Departments have however detected major flaws in respect of governance at the local sphere of government with good public participation being one of the contentious issues. Therefore, this study seeks to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of public consultation processes as implemented by the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the public participation and consultation process of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, with a specific focus on communities within the Northern Areas. This study has three main objectives. The first objective is to determine to what extent communities perceive a commitment by municipal officials to public participation and consultation. The second is to determine to what extent communities within the Northern Areas feel included in the decision-making process within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. Finally, the Municipality’s Oversight Committee, the Ward Committee, and public meetings within the Northern Areas of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality are assessed in order to determine to what extent the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality adheres to the legislative requirements that guide public participation at local government level.

### 1.4. Methodology

This project will use qualitative research methods as it is best suited for a study of this nature, which is concerned with the experiences of the citizens of the Northern Areas, Port Elizabeth, with regard to public participation and inclusion at local government level. Marlow (1998: 10) states that “qualitative information involves the non-numerical examination of phenomena, using words instead of numbers, and focuses on the underlying meanings and patterns of relationships”. According to Anderson and Taylor (2002: 35), qualitative research is research that is somewhat less structured, yet focused on a question being asked. They
further state that this type of research does not make extensive use of statistical methods, and it is more interpretive and tends to have greater depth. As this study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of public participation and consultation within the Northern Areas of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, the qualitative method is best suited because it is more interpretative and would provide a better understanding of how the communities view the said process.

1.4.1 Methods, Techniques And Sampling

As a first step, a content analysis of the relevant documentation and literature, inclusive of the relevant legislation and minutes of public meetings, ward committee meetings and the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality’s Oversight Committee meetings is undertaken. This was done in order to determine the types of questions that would be appropriate to include in the interviewing phase of the study. It also assisted in the assessment of the level of community involvement at the local government level with regard to the quality of service delivery and the drafting of legislation.

Since the researcher is employed within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, participant observation would also be used as a means of gathering information in the various public participation consultation meetings throughout the Municipality as well as official Council meetings. Neuman (2006: 396) notes that “a great deal of what researchers do in the field is to pay close attention, watch, and listen carefully”. This method would add value to this study as the researcher would be able to note the emotions of the communities where the public meetings are held, as well as that of the municipal officials and the political heads through observing their behaviour.

The second step focused on structured interviews with both the high ranking municipal officials within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and community members. Therefore, purposive sampling had been used to conduct elite
interviews with municipal officials who were directly involved with public participation at the Municipality. Neuman (2006: 222) defines purposive sampling as “a non-random sample in which the researcher uses a wide range of methods to locate all possible cases of a highly specific and difficult-to-reach population”. This assisted the study since the aforementioned employees of the Municipality are the custodians of the public consultation and participation process within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

Random sampling was used to identify between 20 and 30 interviewees, inclusive of former ward committee members and ward councillors that attended the Municipality’s public participation meetings in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth. Please refer to Appendix 2 for the interview schedule. Due to circumstances beyond the researcher’s control, he could only interview one ward councillor. Due to the fact that only one ward councillor had been interviewed, the researcher could not generalise across all ward councillors. The aforementioned was a limitation to this study and therefore the data analysis focused on the elite interviews and the interviews with the public.

1.4.2 Data Analysis

A thematic approach to data analysis was employed. Here the researcher searched for commonalities of the data collected and made interpretations based thereon. This would be best suited for this study since Neuman (2006: 458) holds the view that the “qualitative researchers examine patterns of similarities and differences across cases and try to come to terms with their diversity”. Data processing was in the form of text.

1.5 Presentation of Chapters

Chapter two conducts the literature review. This is essential as it would provide the reader with insight with regard to public participation as viewed by various
authors. Chapter three will be a content analysis of the Ward Committee meetings of the Wards in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth and the Annual Report of the Oversight Committee of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. This is essential since it would provide the viewer with an analysis of how the ward committee members and councillors view the effectiveness and efficiency of the processes relating to public participation within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. Lastly, chapter four would present the research findings and recommendations and chapter five providing a comprehensive conclusion.

1.6 Ethics Considerations

Research ethics were taken into consideration in conducting this study. All participants were informed that their participation is voluntary and that anonymity was guaranteed. Only the initials would be requested from all participants with a view to ensuring confidentiality and information relating to the study would be made available by the researcher i.e. in the case of members of the public, verbally or allowing participants to read the relevant information; and for councillors and municipal officials, the information would be forwarded to potential participants be electronic mail. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Speaker and Acting Municipal Manager of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality to interview municipal officials and councillors and members of the public at public meetings. Further to this, the study obtained ethics clearance from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University’s Faculty Higher Degrees Committee. The ethics reference number is H/10/ART/PGS-0019.

1.7 Concluding Remarks

Public protests over the poor or non service delivery have rocked the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality in recent years. Various authors argue that good public participation could be used as a means to reduce the public protests since the communities would be kept abreast of all the issues affecting the Municipality’s
operations. There is increased frustration by communities as a result of poor governance by municipalities and this leads to a lack of confidence in local government by the public. The next chapter will provide the reader with a literature review in order to provide more insight into the various perspectives regarding public participation. The roles of the ward committees and ward councillors, as well as the challenges relating to public consultation and participation will also be provided in order to allow the reader to grasp the concept and objectives of this study more easily.
CHAPTER TWO
PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION: THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK THAT GUIDES PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

The objective of this chapter is to discuss and explain the literature overview of public consultation and participation, to explain the relationship between Batho Pele principles and public consultation and participation, to provide a legislative analysis of the relevant legislation that guide public participation at local government level, discuss the role of ward committees and ward councillors in public consultation and to describe and explain the challenges relating to public participation.

2.1 Public Consultation and Participation: An overview of the literature

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, hereinafter referred to as COGTA, (2009: 10-11) states that the ideal of deeper democratisation at the local level envisaged in the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 has not been realised and instead, local government is characterised by a sense of frustration of communities over poor institutionalisation of systems, poor service delivery and poor political governance. It is further observed:

other institutions including the media and civil society have also been ineffective in increasing municipal accountability and oversight. There is now a lack of citizen confidence and trust in the system. This has been publicly evidenced in the spate of community protests...which may be seen as a symptom of the alienation of citizens from local government.
For example, the protests by communities from the end of October to the beginning of November 2010 in the Kleinskool and Extention 32 area of the Northern Areas of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality over the lack of housing delivery. The more extreme form of community protests over poor service delivery was in 2008 in Sannieshof in the North West Province where the Rate Payers’ Association, after two years of attempts to hold discussions over deficient service delivery, declared a dispute with the municipality and withheld certain payments, and placed them into a trust fund. In this way, a sort of parallel municipality had been created with the Rate Payers’ Association paying for services within that geographic area. De Kock (2010) in the newspaper article of the Eastern Cape Herald, Ratepayers flock to join boycott, notes that an estimated 15 000 ratepayers and about 200 big companies would withhold their rates payments from 1 February 2011 in an effort to force the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality to account to residents in respect of the cash-flow crisis that the Municipality was in at the moment. These ratepayers would deposit their payments in respect of rates and service charges into a separate account until such time that the Municipality accounted to the residents of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. Camay and Gordon (2004: 255) highlights this point by asserting that a 2000 Afrobarometer survey showed that compared to other countries in the region, South Africans have one of the highest rates of participation in protest action in the past and are among the most likely to resort to protest again, given the reason and opportunity. It can also be stated that more service delivery protests may be expected given the fact that Local Government Elections would be taking place in the first quarter of 2011 and the communities could use that as leverage for getting more out of the political leadership within a certain area.

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2 The seventh Southern African Democracy Barometer (SADB) conducted by Research Surveys (Pty) Ltd. from 6 July to 6 August 2000.
By examining the above, it can be stated that ward committees could be used as a tool to mitigate public protests but members of such committees need to act on behalf of the entire community which it serves and not on the basis of political affiliation. As an example of where ward committees are being used to promote the agenda of a specific political party, Zille (2010) argues that the reason for the public protests in the Khayalitsha area within Cape Town was as a result of the ANC seeking to slander the Democratic Alliance before the upcoming Local Government Elections to be held in the first quarter of 2011.\(^6\)

Williams (2005: 21) posit that most researchers also agree that there are various factors that contribute towards meaningful community participation at grassroots level vis-à-vis a particular local authority (municipality), such as the existence of community fora to (re)present the concerns and interests of a specific community to a specific planning authority, reliable and reciprocal contractual relations between the voters and their elected representatives and the political will (commitment) from councillors and officials in a specific municipality to ensure effective, efficient and sustainable community participation in development planning programmes (cf Friedmann, 1992; Fung and Wright, 2001).

From the above, it is clear that ward committees as the link between the municipality and the communities, are central in the process of consultation since they could detect possible reasons or causes for future protests and relay the information to the municipality in order to act or address the communities before the people actually embarked on such protests. Therefore, in this context, the study seeks to determine whether there is indeed a political will and an overall commitment towards public participation by both the officials as well as politicians within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, as perceived by the communities of the Northern Areas.

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The White Paper on Local Government (1998) introduced a new vision for local government, known as developmental local government. In this document, developmental local government is defined as “local government 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”. Hence, local government would work with the communities to improve the quality of their lives and, in the same vein, empower them by letting communities take ownership of the initiatives underway in their respective communities. The ANC defined four key attributes of a developmental state in the South African context adopted at the 53rd ANC Congress held at Polokwane in 2007. In the ANC's Transformation of State and Governance National General Council Discussion Document (2010), the first attribute relates to the strategic orientation which means “an approach premised on people-centred and people-driven change, and sustained development based on high growth rates, restructuring of economy and socio-economic inclusion”. The second attribute speaks about the capacity to lead in the definition of a common national agenda and in mobilising all of society to take part in its implementation, hence having effective systems of interaction with all stakeholders. The third attribute relates to the state's organisational capacity in ensuring that its structures and systems facilitate the realisation of a set agenda, therefore ensuring that the issues of macro-organisation will continue to receive attention. The last attribute speaks about the technical capacity of a developmental state i.e. the ability to translate broad objectives into programmes and projects and to ensure their implementation. Therefore, it can be deduced that the people of the Republic of South Africa would be included and consulted on all fronts of this country's democracy and therefore in its governance at a local, provincial and national level.

Mantzaris and Ngcobo (2007: 25) further notes that local government delivers services to local communities at household level and ensures that national and provincial decisions are implemented satisfactorily. It can therefore be stated that local government is the central point of service delivery throughout South Africa.
In the *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation* (1990) as quoted by Davids, Theron and Mapunye (2005: 113-114), it is stated that

popular participation is, in essence, the empowerment of the people to effectively involve themselves in creating the structures and in designing policies and programmes that serve the interests of all as well as to effectively contribute to the development process and share equitably in its benefits.

This point is shared by Buccus (1995: 20), as quoted by Kakumba and Nsingo (n.d.), who defines citizen/community participation as

the involvements of citizens in a wide range of administrative policy-making activities, including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects in order to orient government programmes toward community needs, build public support, and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within society.

To this end, the World Bank, as quoted by Buccus *et. al.*, (2007) states that “participation is a process in which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and the resources which affect them”. By examining the above, it can be stated that community participation is the continuous involvement of communities in the matters of local government. By continuous, it is meant that municipalities should not only consult with communities when it is required to do so by law, for instance during the budget process, but should do so throughout the year in order to keep communities abreast of any challenges that may delay the implementation of the programmes of the municipality. In that way, the communities would feel involved in the municipal processes and could also make meaningful suggestions on how to address any challenges that may be experienced.

COGTA (2009: 13) notes that
representative government is complemented by the right of communities to participate in the decisions that affect development in their areas, and a corresponding duty on municipalities to encourage community participation in matters of local governance. National legislation provides the mechanisms for public participation, which include ward committees and a variety of other measures designed to foster open, transparent and consultative municipal government.

The ANC regards public participation as a cornerstone of democracy. Blade Nzimande, as quoted by Nyalunga (2006), asserts that “the question of public participation is central in any democratic order, and it is something we dare not take for granted but must ensure that we constantly work on it all the time”. Therefore, the South African Government has identified seven critical issues that need to be addressed in order to achieve the overarching goal of a responsive, accountable, effective and efficient local government system, as follows:

1. Develop a more rigorous, data driven and detailed segmentation of municipalities that better reflect the varied capacities and contexts within municipalities and lays the basis for a differentiated approach to municipal financing, planning and support.
2. Ensure improved access to essential services.
3. Initiate ward-based programmes to sustain livelihoods.
4. Contribute to the achievement of sustainable human settlements and quality neighbourhoods.
5. Strengthen participatory governance.
6. Strengthen the administrative and financial capability of municipalities.
7. Address coordination problems and strengthen cross-departmental initiatives (Delivery Agreement for Outcome 9: 2010).

By examining the above issues, it can be stated that municipalities need to be aware of the complexities and cultural differences within all the wards of its area of jurisdiction. In this way, it would be easier to identify and differentiate the poor
from the less needy. Therefore, it can align its priorities and budget allocations accordingly. Thus, the strengthening of participatory governance, as one of the seven issues to be addressed, is critical to ensuring that the rest of the issues as outlined by the South African Government are attended to. As such, public participation is viewed by the South African Government as an important element that needs to be improved in order to make the operations of local government effective and efficient.

Ambert (2000), as quoted by Davids et. al. (2005: 112), asserts that “the term ‘public participation’ gained popularity from a growing recognition of the need to ‘involve’ (both a problematic concept and strategy) stakeholders in development interventions”. By problematic, it is meant that given the political dynamics of South Africa, there will always be stakeholders that will attempt to taint the image of the local authorities and by doing so, also provide a negative image of the political party in charge of that specific municipality with a view to soliciting more votes for the next local government elections. On the other hand, it could also be stated that only a certain portion of the communities belonging to or that are affiliated to the majority party of a municipality, would benefit from contracts which could also result in an increase in the problematic concept stakeholders.

The White Paper on Local Government affirms that citizens must participate in local government as ‘consumers and service-users’ (development), ‘partners in resource mobilisation’ (state-building), and ‘voters’ and ‘participants in policy processes’ (democracy). Therefore, local government needs to provide quality services to consumers and this could be achieved by consulting with communities on a continuous basis in respect of the level of service that needs to be rendered and how challenges could be addressed.

According to Michael (2004) and Greenstein (2004) as quoted by Mantzaris and Ngcobo (2007: 25), it is an international phenomenon that local governments are more successful when they commit themselves to teamwork; therefore
councillors, traditional leaders, officials, communities, the private sector and all structures of government need to work together as partners. Local Government therefore needs to create the platform for active consultation with communities and as such needs to make budgetary provisions available for such consultation. Kuye (2002: 13) shares similar sentiments and posits that initiatives to strengthen government institutions and civil society form the foundation of good governance, and as such, attempting to create transparent, accountable and democratic government. Therefore, it can be stated that for local government to function efficiently, it needs to create strong ties with all relevant stakeholders and also take the views of such stakeholders into account when making decisions. The consideration of the inputs made by civil society is of paramount importance and municipalities should not just merely consult them without actually taking an interest in the points or concerns raised by them.

Fourie (2002: 121) argues that accountability encompasses a three-tiered definition:

1. “To be responsible for the execution of activities;
2. To be responsible for compliance or non-compliance with set requirements; and
3. To be responsible for reporting on the progress of compliance or non-compliance with the set requirements”.

The aforementioned definition by Fourie is important since the elected politicians need to account to their constituents with regard to decisions that were taken by them and this can only be done through public consultation. Therefore, there is a strong link between accountability and public consultation, however, politicians could be tempted to use municipal funding to carry out party duties like the solicitation of votes through public meetings, which is not in line with South African legislation.
Brinkerhoff (2002: 293) shares similar sentiments as Fourie by arguing that “the sense that government needs to improve, that its power should be circumscribed, and that its actions should be exercised according to the will of the citizenry, puts accountability front and centre on the stage of current governance issues”. Local government must therefore be able to explain the reasons for non-delivery on its promises to communities, something which is very difficult to do given the widespread protests over poor service delivery throughout South Africa. Therefore, this study seeks to determine the extent to which the communities feel included in the decision-making process of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

By examining the various definitions by different authors with regard to the term public participation, one can argue that the concept becomes a contested one in that definitions differ from scholar to scholar and is therefore understood differently by different stakeholders. To this end, Pretty, Guijet, Scoones and Thompson (1995), as quoted by Davids et. al. (2005: 116), developed seven typologies to demonstrate the different conceptions with regard to public participation.

1. Passive participation. People “participate” by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. “Participation” relates to a unilateral top-down announcement by the authority or change agent. Information being shared belongs to outsiders and/or professionals. The community remains clueless, frustrated and powerless. Examples of these are with regard to the adoption of by-laws of municipal policies that are being developed by professionals who are usually consultants. These consultants would take draft documents to the communities with a view to solicit inputs and comments from communities but the room for input is narrowed by the fact that the communities have not been involved from the initiation stage of the draft policy or by-law.

2. Participation in information giving. People “participate” by answering questions posed in questionnaires or telephone interviews or similar
“public participation” strategies. The public do not have the opportunity to influence or direct proceedings as the findings are neither shared nor evaluated for accuracy. Examples of these are at the various customer care centres where questionnaires and a suggestion boxes are placed with a view to solicit a feeling of how the customers feel about the services being rendered by the municipality.

3. Participation by consultation. People “participate” by being consulted by professionals. The professionals define both problems and solutions and may modify these in the light of the public's responses. This process does not include any share in decision-making by the public, nor are the professionals under any obligation to consider the public’s views. This is a process whereby, for example, a project had been initiated and the project manager who would normally be a consultant arranges public meetings to only get a buy-in from the communities affected by the proposed project in order to ensure the smooth implementation of the project without any public protests. Therefore, if one looks at this type of participation and passive participation it could be stated that there is an over-reliance by municipal officials on consultants or officials, which is problematic given the fact that officials are highly paid to provide a service but instead they choose to use consultants. This also limits the level of accountability of municipal officials to the public and as such does not lead to improved public participation.

4. Participation for material incentives. People “participate” by providing resources such as labour, in return for food and cash. This typology typically takes place in rural environments, where, for example, farmers provide the fields but are not “involved” in the experiment or learning process. The people have no stake in prolonging the activities when the incentives end.

5. Functional participation. People “participate” in a group context to meet predetermined objectives related to the programme/project, which may involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social
organisations. This type of “involvement” tends not to occur at the early stages of project cycles or planning, but rather once the important decisions have already been made.

6 Interactive participation. People participate in joint analysis, the development of action plans and capacity building. Participation is seen as a right, not just a means to achieve project goals. This is the aim of the various legislative documents relating to public participation and consultation in South Africa and officials need to strive towards those goals when consulting with communities. Such consultation would ensure the co-operation of communities and would as such reduce the public protests with regard to the level of services being rendered by municipalities throughout South Africa.

7 Self-mobilisation. People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. This bottom-up approach allows the public to develop contacts with external institutions for resources and the technical advice they need, but they themselves retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated, bottom-up and self-reliant mobilisation and collective actions may or may not challenge an existing inequitable distribution of wealth and power. An example of this is communities resorting to the establishment of Rate Payers’ Associations and to withhold rates and service fees.

2.2. Batho Pele principles and Public Participation and Consultation

The White Paper on Local Government (1998) notes that the Batho Pele ('People First') White Paper, issued by the Minister for Public Service and Administration, provides a useful approach to building a culture and practice of customer service. Batho Pele is based on eight key principles, which follow below:
1. Consultation: Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of public service they receive, and, where possible, should be given a choice about the services which are provided.

2. Service standards: Citizens should know what standard of service to expect.

3. Access: All citizens should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled.

4. Courtesy: Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.

5. Information: Citizens should be given full and accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive.

6. Openness and transparency: Citizens should know how departments are run, how resources are spent, and who is in charge of particular services.

7. Redress: If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.

8. Value-for-money: Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value-for-money.

The Batho Pele principles commit all municipal officials to quality service delivery, to setting of and striving for internationally recognised service standards and to honest and transparent communication with the country's citizens. Customers are now being viewed as clients with a promise of professional service, for instance at customer care centres. This obliges municipalities to continuously seek suggestions from clients with a view to improving services rendered. Consultation is of critical importance to this study, however, local authorities have an option to use or not use the inputs made by the public.
If one examines the various definitions and typologies of public participation and consultation, it could be stated that there is not one single definition for this concept and that there are varying views depending on the circumstances. It is also clear that, even though there is universal agreement to the Batho Pele principles by public officials, these principles are unfortunately not adhered to when public meetings are held, as this study has found and which will be presented later. There needs to be more interactive participation by municipalities with communities, as outlined in the typologies to public participation.

2.3. Legislative Framework

Buccus (2008: 49) alludes to the fact that public participation and consultation is enshrined in the South African Constitution, in that in addition to choosing and electing public representatives, communities have the right to influence government decisions. Section 152 of the Constitution, 1996, implies that local government needs to go beyond the notion of just merely consulting but to make mechanisms available that would ensure active participation by communities in matters that affect them. Hence, relevant and meaningful information needs to be made available to communities before the public meetings in order for the communities to engage with such information and to come up with meaningful contributions at the public meetings. To this end, this study seeks to ascertain what is being done with information emanating from public meetings and also whether adequate information is being made available by the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality for such meetings.

The Batho Pele principles, in line with the legislation, set the tone for municipal officials to be more accessible to communities and to provide meaningful and relevant information to communities on a continuous basis. Therefore, the municipality needs to ensure that all the officials, councillors and ward committee members are familiar with the Batho Pele principles and needs to put
mechanisms in place to ensure that these principles are adhered to when any of the aforementioned parties engage with communities.

The organisational structure of local government is explicitly prescribed in the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, and more so in Sections 16 and 51, which provides that a municipality must structure its administration, budget and planning accordingly in order to ensure effective and efficient public consultation. In addition to requiring local councils to consult communities on key municipal processes, the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 establishes ward committees consisting of ten people and chaired by the ward councillor. Ward committees are intended to act as the main means of communication between the Council and local communities by reporting any matters affecting their respective wards to Municipal Departments or Council through the ward councillor’s office. An analysis of the effectiveness of the aforementioned will be provided in Chapter Three of this study.

In terms of Chapter four of the Municipal Systems Act (2000), a municipality must adopt or promote community participation and must also provide for the following:

1. Receipt, processing and consideration of petitions and complaints lodged by members of the community;
2. Notification and public comment procedures;
3. Public meetings and hearings by the Council;
4. Consultative sessions with community organisations; and
5. Report-back sessions.

From the above, it can be deduced that Chapter four of the Municipal Systems Act outlines how public participation needs to be organised by the municipality and the Batho Pele principles seek to ensure that it is efficient and effective. Therefore, this study seeks to analyse to what extent the Nelson Mandela Bay
Municipality is in line with the legislative requirements with regard to community participation. By examining the above, it can be stated that public participation and consultation is a statutory requirement and this fact is well-known to the public which could also be a contributing factor to the increased public protests throughout South Africa. Municipalities therefore need to ensure that structures are in place and platforms for improved public consultation and participation are created as provided for by law.

2.4. The role of Ward Councillors in Community Consultation

Benit-Gbaffou (2008: 26) observes that increasingly public discourse accentuate the role of ward councillors in urban policy-making and service delivery coupled with a role as mediators between civil society and government at the local level. COGTA (2009: 10) and Nyalunga (2006) share this point by arguing that the effective functioning of a municipality begins with its political leadership and that ward councillors are the most direct form of access people have to government. By examining the aforementioned, it can be stated that there needs to be a political will by the leadership to ensure that effective and efficient public consultation takes place by committing to making resources available that would enable it efficiency and effectiveness. The ward and portfolio councillors are the drivers of change in the communities since they are the closest to the people and are as such in a position to talk to the people and listen to their needs.

Piper and Deacon (n.d.) hold the view that effective ward committees which deepen the municipal deliberative process require an effective ward councillor. Without a councillor who is competent, well-organised and committed to the ward committee, the structure cannot operate. This is because the councillor is responsible for how often the committee meets, what it discusses, what information ward committee members acquire, and what information the council obtains from ward committees.
COGTA (2009: 15) similarly posit that ward councillors serve as a linkage between the ward committee and other government levels in that through effective and adequate community consultation, provincial and national government levels are in a better position to assess implementation of various national policies in specific wards, and aid further planning in terms of policy.

By concluding the above it can be stated that public consultation starts with the political will of a municipality’s leadership. Ward councillors have an active role to play in public consultation by co-ordinating the functions of the ward committees and to ensure that they are active within their respective sectors. Therefore, ward councillors need to ensure that they receive training on a continuous basis in respect of the matters affecting local government in order to ensure that they stay abreast of any new developments. Since ward councillors work hand-in-hand with the ward committees, the former need to foster an open relationship with the latter and also intervene immediately if any conflicts arise within the ward committees.

### 2.5 The Role of Ward Committees in Community Consultation

A study conducted by Rakodi (2004) in Millstein (2008: 37) found that ward-based representation systems increases representation of the interests of the poor as these systems encourages local representation and accountability. However, Rakodi further warns that the success of ward-based representation systems are dependent on how these systems are perceived by the community it represents and the nature and suitability of ward boundaries. Therefore, municipalities need to provide the communities with clear and concise objectives for ward based representation since some of the people might view it as exercises conducted solely by the political parties. This would deter some community members from participating in such exercises and it could also lead to some political parties claiming to be initiators of the same. To this end, ward-based planning would increase the number of participation significantly but
municipalities need to be at the forefront of the engagements and not just leave it up to the ward committee for implementation.

Roger Southall, (in Nyalunga 2006) regards ward committees as a central vehicle for community consultation. Nyalunga (2006) posits that ward committees have a central role in ensuring that voters are included in the processes of decision-making that affect the conduct of their day-to-day lives. It becomes increasingly evident that ward committees’ main tasks are to communicate and consult with the community in respect of development and service plans. Therefore ward committees are the drivers of public consultation at a local governmental level, and as Craythorne (2006: 116) notes “the object of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government”. To this end, ward committees are crucial vehicles for improved service delivery that would in turn decrease the number of protests throughout municipalities in South Africa by increasing public participation and representation.

According to the then Minister of Provincial and Local Government, Mr S Mafumadi (2002), ward committees are delegated the task of creating and maintaining unbiased communication channels between the people and government. Indeed, the government-issued Resource Book on Ward Committees (DPLG, 2005:36) regards communication between the people and ward committees as the fundamental function of ward committees. In order to execute its function, ward committees are charged with:

1. “advising and assisting the ward councillor on local needs, issues and policy;
2. passing information from residents to council and back; and,

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1 As quoted by Piper and Deacon (n.d.), in a published Notice subsequent to the Community Participation Conference held from 28 to 29 March 2005, Section 5(3) (b) of the Notice, entitled ‘Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees’ (Notice 965 of 2005)
(3) interacting with other forums and organisations on matters affecting the ward”.

Similarly, with respect to community mobilisation, ward committees need to

(1) attend to all matters that affect and benefit the community;
(2) act in the best interest of the community; and,
(3) ensure the active participation of the community in service payment campaigns, the IDP process, the budgetary process, decisions about service provision, by-laws, and by delimiting and chairing zonal meetings (Piper, 2008: 42).

Therefore, ward committees could serve as the advisory bodies of ward councillors by making recommendations to the ward councillor and Council and by engaging local residents on matters of local governance without fear, favour or prejudice. By looking at the holistic picture of service delivery throughout South Africa at all levels, ward committees are central to ensuring successful implementation of programmes and projects. An example of this is the Provincial Housing Development Project where the project managers would consult with the ward councillor and his or her committee before commencing with work. The absence of the aforementioned could be detrimental to the successful completion of the project since the communities would start asking questions and doubting the motives for such a project.

Piper (2008: 45) holds that “it is important to note that ward committees are intended to enhance democracy both by adding a lower level of representation to local government, and by facilitating more public participation in municipal processes. Party politics affects both these roles, albeit in different ways”. Piper further states that “in respect to their representative role, ward committees have the potential to help keep municipal leaders accountable by making them answer the views of local communities”. Therefore, ward committees could be seen as
the vehicles that ensure that public participation runs smoothly by communicating the objectives of public meetings in a simple manner and by providing more information and explanation of matters like the legislation and how this would impact on communities. They also ensure that the elected politicians are held accountable for their decisions in local government by requesting explanations and reasons for decisions and also by writing letters to or visiting the municipal offices with a view to being able to explain to the layperson the reasons for such decisions.

By examining the above, it can be stated that theoretically ward committees foster better communication channels between not only municipalities, but also provincial and national government. These Committees need to be impartial and unbiased in carrying out their duties and should not let party politics interfere in the way it is functioning or relating to concerns raised by the communities. The ward committees in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality have however been dissolved since 11 September 2009 and it is evident that it is contributing factor to the increased public protests in respect of service delivery.

2.6 The Role of Municipalities in Community Consultation

Public participation and consultation in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality resides in the Office of the Constituency Coordinator.\(^8\) To this end, this office needs to be adequately resourced in order to ensure the compliance of all the Directorates within the institution to various statutory rules, which affect public consultation.

Buccus et. al., (2007) assert that “nowhere has the emphasis on public participation been more keenly felt than in local municipalities. Mostly this is because it is the sphere of government where the greatest constitutional and statutory obligations to public participation exist. Perhaps it is also because it is

\(^8\) Please see Appendix 3.
the sphere of government perceived as ‘closest to the people’”. In light of this, Craythorne (2006: 313) argues that there is a moral and legislative obligation on municipalities to develop a culture of participatory democracy where a strong relationship exists between government and civil society at local level. The aforementioned responsibility of local government is well documented in the South African Constitution and the relevant policies of South Africa relating to public consultation. In this light, Piper and Deacon (n.d.) stress four municipal responsibilities to facilitate the creation of a participatory democratic culture at local level. They are:

(i) to ensure the correct constitution of ward committees;
(ii) to train ward councillors and ward committee members;
(iii) to establish resource committees and, perhaps most importantly; and
(iv) to clearly define the role of ward committees in Council processes.

The aforementioned points are critical to effective public consultation since ward committee members need to be empowered and trained with regard to the various policies, by-laws and processes of Council that would enable them to perform at a satisfactory level. Ward councillors also need to be empowered with regard to all the new developments within the local authorities and this will enable them to pass the information to the ward committees, who would in turn pass it on to the communities. Therefore, continuous training by all stakeholders involved in ensuring efficient public participation has a knock-on effect on how the communities are empowered with regard to the service delivery processes. The ward committees' role in council is of an advisory nature, meaning that ward councillors could or could not use the inputs made by the former and this poses possible challenges in respect of the functionality of the ward committee since the members have varying viewpoints to that of ward councillors.

The White Paper on Local Government (1998) identifies four levels of citizen participation by the public. The first is as voters in order to ensure maximum
democratic accountability of the elected political leadership for the policies they are empowered to promote. The second is through citizens who express their views during and after the policy development process to ensure that policies reflect community preferences as far as possible. The third is as consumers and end-users who expect value for money, affordable services and courteous and responsive services. These are in line with the Batho Pele principles since both documents emphasise value for money and the need for the public to be furnished with information and to be treated courteously. The last level of citizen participation is through organised partners involved in the mobilisation of resources for development via for-profit businesses, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations.  

From the above, it is clear that the public also has an important role to play in respect of the rendering of services and the municipality relies heavily on the inputs from the public in respect of services to be rendered. Carrim (2010) reinforces this point by arguing that the state is nothing without the people and consequently effective service delivery cannot occur without effective public participation, especially at local government level. A close relationship is therefore needed between local government and the general public and this process needs to be facilitated by the municipal officials, in conjunction with the ward committees, ward councillors, and the residents in the service delivery process. There is however a responsibility on municipalities to develop the capacity of local communities to understand and participate in the governing process as a partner and not just merely be consulted.

2.7 Challenges in Public Consultation

COGTA (2009: 12) argues that “councillors have been accused of being arrogant and insensitive to the needs of the community. Lack of effective complaints management and no coherent systems in place to measure service delivery for

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9 Please see Appendix 3 for the various stakeholders in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.
quality of client interface are some of the political reasons underlying protest action”. Camay and Gordon (2004: 253) concur and further argue that elected councillors are perceived to represent only the political constituency that voted for them rather than the entire community. Therefore, some ward councillors are biased towards the needs of the constituency that elected them and as such deliberately exclude others from benefiting or getting the ‘last bits’ of whatever has been allocated to that specific ward. Millstein (2008: 37) supports this and further laments that the ward committee system centralise power in the hands of the ward councillor, thus all projects earmarked for a particular ward would firstly be considered for the ward councillors’ constituents rather than who needs a particular service the most.

With reference to the various legislative guidelines the government has put in place, Nyalunga (2006) laments that even though one finds legislative requirements and guidelines geared towards the creation of accountable and transparent government, they are ineffective. Thus, Nyalunga further stresses due to:

(1) Party politicisation of development and participatory structures;
(2) Lack of commitment by municipalities to prioritise public consultation;
(3) The slow pace of basic service delivery. The lack of access to basic social services does not only hamper participation but also deters ordinary South Africans from enjoying a decent standard of living;
(4) General lack of capacity amongst stakeholders;
(5) Access to information; and,
(6) Failure to recognise and work closely with community-based organisations.

From the above, it could be stated that despite the progressive legislative frameworks sought to create a platform for meaningful community consultation the legislations have not yet yielded any major results thus far. One of the
reasons for this could be the lack of trust among the various stakeholders with regard to service delivery. Indeed, Nyalunga (2006) observed that ward committees are generally seen as ineffective in creating and advocating citizen participation at the local government level. He stresses that their inefficiency is due to lack of capacity and incentives at the cost of the advancement of the communities they represent. Similarly, Benit-Gbaffou (2008: 31) argues that ward committees do not have sufficient ability to challenge their ward councillors if they are not performing their central duties of facilitating communication and interaction between the ward committee and government, ensuring access to information on specifically council policies and decisions, thus limiting the mandate of the ward committee. Therefore, he further notes that it is no surprise that there is a lack of commitment of residents for ward committee meetings and an overall lack of participation.

Gaventa (1995), as quoted by Camay and Gordon (2004: 251), explains that “when the people are consulted, it may often be to play the role of supporters for issues and strategies that have already been defined for them by the more professional others”. The aforementioned is not in line with the provisions made by the ANC, which is “government for the people, by the people” Camay and Gordon (2004: 251) also state that “talk will replace action and there is increasing complaint that too much is made of “talk shops”, and there is not enough follow-up action results.”

By examining the above, it can be stated that although there were a number of measures taken by the South African Government to date with regard to public participation in principle, there remains various challenges that hamper effective and efficient public consultation and its implementation. The South African Government also needs to review the current legislation in order to oblige local government to make adequate funding available for public participation and consultation. It could also be stated that the effective and efficient implementation

10 Please see the 2004 ANC Election Manifesto in www.anc.org.za/2556.
of public participation processes would also reduce the widespread public protests and also improve the tarnished reputation of a number of municipalities throughout South Africa.

2.8 Concluding remarks

Since local government is the closest to the people, it would also receive the most hostility from the people and therefore participatory governance needs to be the order of the day. This would reduce the number of public protests and would therefore also enhance the public image of all municipalities throughout South Africa. The following chapter would provide the reader with an analysis of the ward committee meetings and the annual reports of the oversight committee with specific emphasis on public participation at the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.
CHAPTER THREE
ANALYSIS OF WARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND THE ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

In the Delivery Agreement for Outcome 9 (2010: 49), it is stated that the establishment of ward committees is not compulsory but most of the municipalities have adopted this model to improve public participation. However, the following challenges have been identified in the aforementioned document:

1. There is inadequate support to plan, manage and organise regular and effective ward committee meetings.
2. Inadequate support personnel to prepare agenda and minutes.
3. Inadequate support to follow-up on decisions taken.
4. Inadequate support to effectively communicate dates of meetings and decisions taken to the rest of the community.
5. Lack of funding to support ward committee members.

By taking the above into account, the objective of this chapter is to provide a content analysis of the minutes of ward committee meetings in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth between 2007 and 2009 and the annual reports of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality’s Oversight Committee for the 2007/08 and 2008/09 financial years.

The Oversight Committee is a multi-party committee which consists of 11 members with seven members belonging to the ANC, three to the Democratic Alliance and one to the Pan-Africanist Congress. The annual reports, which are public documents, have been downloaded from the Municipality’s papertrail system\(^{11}\) by the researcher who is also an employee of the Nelson Mandela Bay

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\(^{11}\) The Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality uses a Papertrail System in which all official documents are stored and could be accessed by all municipal employees who have access to the system.
Municipality. The aforementioned committee has been replaced by the Municipal Public Accounts Committee\textsuperscript{12} in November 2010 by resolution of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality’s Council and as such could not produce an Annual Report for the 2009/10 Financial Year.

The purpose of this chapter is to track whether the inputs and comments from the ward committees and the Oversight Committee of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality are being addressed by the municipal directorates. A thematic approach was used, as the content analysis of the minutes of the abovementioned meetings and the annual reports and the main findings that emanated from those meetings were used as the benchmark for constructing the interview questions that were put to members of the public as well as to the ward councillors.

The researcher analysed the minutes of the ward committee meetings and the Oversight Committee to locate the challenges and recommendations relating to public participation as viewed by the ward committee members and the councillors. The analysis of the ward committee meetings within the Northern Areas would assist this study as the researcher would be able to ascertain whether the concerns raised in the public meetings and the ward committee meetings do indeed get addressed by the municipal directorates. By analysing the minutes of the Oversight Committee, the researcher would be able to ascertain if there is indeed commitment by the ruling political party and the municipal officials towards improved public participation and consultation. The challenges and recommendations as raised by the ward committees and the Oversight Committee would be compared to the prescripts of the relevant legislations with a view to formulating recommendations for improved public participation.

\textsuperscript{12} The Oversight Committee has been replaced by the Municipal Public Accounts Committee at the directive of the Minister of Co-Operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr S S Sicheka. This change envisaged improved transparency and accountability by the municipal directorates and politicians.
participation and consultation within the Northern Areas of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

The Draft Framework for Coordination of the work of the Constituency Coordinator’s Directorate, which is hereto attached as Appendix 2 would be compared to the main points emanating from the abovementioned minutes and would then be used to examine whether the aforementioned directorate was performing its functions as mandated by Council and the prescripts of South African legislation.

3.1. Analysis of Ward Committee Meetings

The minutes produced from the ward committee meetings were of a poor quality and were not uniform in terms of structure. On one occasion, the Constituency Services Directorate undertook to return the minutes to the ward committee secretary noting that the minutes were inadequate and could not be understood and further demanded that the document be reproduced to a more acceptable standard. An example of this was in the 23 January 2007 minutes of Ward 35 where the minutes were one page long and did not have any recommendations or resolutions. The Municipality, therefore, needs to ensure that all ward committee secretaries receive proper training since the minutes emanating from those meetings need to be distributed to the relevant directorates for action. The Constituency Services Directorate could request the Committee Services Section of the Municipality to assist them in training the ward committee assistants.

The Municipal Council requires all ward committees to hold monthly meetings in accordance with Section 73 of the Municipal Structures Act in order to ensure that all issues affecting the wards are addressed by the municipal directorates. The analysis of the minutes of the ward committees in the Northern Areas revealed that none of the nine wards actually adhered to that resolution by Council, which was problematic. For instance, only four ward committee
meetings had been held in Ward 38 from January 2007 to the time all ward committees have been dissolved by Council. No written correspondence could be found from the Constituency Services Directorate reprimanding the various Wards for not adhering to that principle in the folders that were examined by the researcher in relation to minutes of meetings.

In most of the wards there were complaints about ward committee members not attending ward committee meetings and not submitting written apologies for the same before meetings. For instance, in Ward 34, this concern was repeatedly raised by the ward councillor. This is problematic since minutes of the ward committee meetings are viewed as important tools that the Municipality uses to respond to the needs of the communities. Furthermore, it was found that there were constant complaints about the incentives that the ward committee members received for carrying out their duties, which could also be a contributing factor to members not being more active in their roles. Ward committees serve as advisory bodies to the Ward Councillors and need to be active in rendering their duties with regard to their respective sectors.

In all of the ward committees within the Northern Areas, with the exception of Ward 11, there were constant complaints about ward committee members not working together due to their political affiliation. In Wards 12 and 34, there were cases where ward committee members introduced themselves to the communities as the ward councillor and carried out duties without consulting the ward councillor. This was problematic, since ward committees have been established to serve as the link between Council and the communities, and consequently need to work in unison when carrying out their duties. It was also found that some of the ward committee members only volunteered their services with the sole purpose of promoting the agenda of their political parties or to improve their chances of becoming ward councillors too, and this also led to infighting between members and friction with the ward councillors. In Ward 12, which was a DA ward, the ANC branch operating in the ward accused the ward
councillor of only giving jobs to those people who had voted for her, and
demanded the audience of the ward councillor. It can therefore be stated that the
Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality needs to put measures in place that would
improve relationships between members of ward committees and with the ward
councillor. One of the ward councillors attempted to address the infighting within
the ward committee by arranging bi-lateral meetings with all the members where
members could express their concerns relating to the functioning of the
committee and possible ways of improving the service to the community.
Unfortunately, the ward councillor was not completely successful as one of the
ward committee members resorted to using his ward committee identity card to
solicit support for the Independent Democrats within the ward which led to that
member being removed from the ward committee.

There were instances where senior municipal officials also attended ward
committee meetings with a view to empower the ward committee members with
regard to the municipal processes, for instance the Director of Integrated
Development Planning and the Director for Customer Care and Revenue
Management were invited by Ward 34 and provided the ward committee with
more information in respect of the IDP and the Assistance to the Poor Policy of
the Municipality. This is critical, since there are instances where ward committee
members complained about not being empowered by the Municipality and that
they could not give the community members adequate answers to questions.
The community will only respect ward committee members if they have answers
to questions and are able to give correct direction as to what procedures to
follow when queries are raised.

There was an incident in Ward 35 where community members threatened to dump
all their household rubbish in front of the ward councillor’s office since their
complaints relating to illegal dumping were not addressed expeditiously. The
matter had been raised with the relevant directorate by the ward councillor and
follow-ups had been made by the ward committee secretary, but to no avail. This
example shows that there are areas where either the Constituency Services Directorate has limitations or the relevant directorates did not perform their duties. This is central and needs to be highlighted by the Constituency Services Directorate in order to ensure that the matters raised by the community are addressed as a matter of urgency. More mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that directorates do attend to the issues raised by the community through the offices of the ward councillors. Notwithstanding the aforementioned example, it must be stated that there are many instances where the ward committees have applauded the directorates for attending to issues in a speedy manner. For instance, in Helenvale during the load shedding in 2008 when the electrical appliances in households would burst as a result of the surge in the power current; the Electricity and Energy Department provided the ward committee with information on how to avoid that from reoccurring that same day and distributed pamphlets within the ward.

Where vacancies existed within ward committees, such as in Ward 32, the Constituency Services Directorate often took too long to ensure that these were filled and this has also led to ward committee members becoming frustrated since more pressure was put on them to fill the void left by the vacancies. This issue has to be addressed and a policy needs to be put in place to set out the exact procedure, with timeframes, to be followed in the event of vacancies so that the ward committees function smoothly as envisaged by the relevant legislation.

The ward committee members in one of the wards in the Northern Areas conducted a survey to check how many residents actually knew what the IDP was. The results were discouraging according to the minutes of the Ward 35 Committee minutes. Only 25 percent of people interviewed knew what the IDP was and this shows that the Municipality was not doing enough to empower the general public with regard to governance processes that needed to be followed. The IDP and Budget public participation process is crucial to delivery of the
sustainable services and the general public needs to be educated in order to make meaningful contributions at the said meetings. Most people use the aforementioned public meetings to complain about the poor rendering of services and the prevalence of crime instead of giving input relating to the IDP and the budget.

One of the ward councillors, who was not a member of the ruling political party of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, resorted to reporting to a local radio station on the plight of the people living in his ward. Housing delivery issues was the main point of concern that was raised by the Ward 34 councillor. This could however, also be seen as a political tactic to shame the ruling party or it could have been a genuine appeal to the Municipality as well as the ruling party to address the issues in the Northern Areas. In most of the public meetings that the researcher attended, many of the people living in the Northern Areas complained that the ruling party was only concerned with the previously disadvantaged areas and had forgotten about them. This was one of the main concerns raised at the 27 October 2010 public meeting that was held at the Gelvandale Community Centre, which the Executive Mayor of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality also attended. The people also felt that the pace at which services get delivered in the Northern Areas was too slow compared to that of the previously disadvantaged areas.

All the ward committee members had challenges regarding the submission of written reports to the ward councillors such as reports in respect of workshops they had attended. This underlines the need for the Municipality to ensure that ward committee members do receive training on a regular basis or that a qualifying criterion be developed in future that would ensure that all members do have basic education and skills. The latter is however difficult since ward committee members are elected democratically by the people living in that ward.
Having a quorum at meetings was also an issue and in one of the wards, four ward committee meetings had to be cancelled because of there not being a quorum. The members who did attend the meetings where there was no quorum also complained that they were living far from the ward councillor’s office and that they would not receive a travelling allowance for such meetings. This issue is central since the ward committee members need to table all the issues relating to their wards at the ward committee meetings in order for the Constituency Services Directorate to disseminate all the complaints to the relevant directorates within the Municipality.

Another issue of concern within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality is the demarcation of wards. Numerous complaints have been made at the public meetings regarding access to the ward councillor. For instance, in Ward 41, the people living in the Old Bethelsdorp areas would have to take two taxis in order to get to the ward councillor’s office which was situated in Booysen Park. The people in Bethelsdorp would rather go to the ward councillor’s office in Bloemendal, which was within walking distance from their homes in order to raise issues affecting them. These issues would often be left unattended, since there were times when the ward councillor in Bloemendal would either forget or just refuse to attend to the issues raised by the people living in Old Bethelsdorp, as the two ward councillors belonged to different political parties and would not want the other one to get the credit for service delivery.

An example of where the ward committee members were all working together to the benefit of all within that area was to be found in the Schauderville area, where some of the ward committee members would patrol in the evenings to check for broken street lights to be reported to the Electricity and Energy Directorate for repairs. The other group would patrol during the day for illegal dumping sites, potholes and broken or stolen drain covers for reporting to the relevant directorate by the ward councillor’s assistant in order to be addressed. Some of the ward committee members in that Ward also attended some of the
Council meetings in order to gain more insight into municipal processes. In Ward 32, the ward committee members were requested to take action as soon as crises arose and not to wait until the ward councillor was available. All the members in the Ward 12 committee, which was in Malabar, were given a chance to chair the ward committee meetings and were thus empowered in that regard.

From the above, it can be deduced that ward committees also serve as the bodies that warn the Municipality of potential disasters. An example is the matter of the power surges that occurred during the electricity cuts that damaged electrical appliances and could have led to litigation by members of the public. The members and ward councillor of Ward 13 committee, which was in Helenvale sent numerous letters to the Electricity and Energy Directorate informing them of the problem and it was resolved. The ward councillor in Arcadia introduced a Ward Committee Member of the Month Award in an effort to improve the performance of the ward committee members. This yielded good results since the members felt that their efforts were being recognised.

Concern was expressed in most of the meetings analysed in respect of the fact that most of the inputs made by ward councillors and ward committee members in respect of the IDP had not been included in the draft IDP documents. In Ward 12 it was lamented that the ward based planning initiative had not materialised and the submissions made in the bilateral meetings as well as the mayoral outreach meetings had not been included in the IDP document.

In Ward 32, Cleary Estate, the ward councillor and the committee resolved to hold public meetings throughout the ward, in Missionvale, Saltlake, and Hillside in order to introduce the ward councillor and the ward committee members. They used free media to advertise the public meetings as well as loud-hailing. This is central to building a good and open relationship with the communities within a ward and would also open the channels for communication with the general
public. Therefore, all ward councillors need to have public meetings on a
continuous basis which would not only make the ward councillor aware of issues facing people in the ward but would also foster a relationship of trust with the communities.

Concern was expressed at the fact that the Constituency Services Directorate would arrange workshops and give sufficient notification to all members but would then change the venues or dates on the same day or a day before the originally scheduled date. This also leads to negativity by ward committee members and needs to be addressed before the ward committees are reinstated by Council. It was also found that some ward committees, such as in Ward 35, had queries regarding the proceedings at workshops that have been arranged by the Constituency Services Directorate. They expressed concern that there was not sufficient time for responses to the questions asked and therefore they did not gain anything from the workshops in terms of knowledge and empowerment. One of the wards requested the Constituency Services Directorate to arrange a workshop in order to discuss a municipal by-law and awaited a response from the said directorate from 6 March 2008 to 9 May 2008. Eventually the item was removed from the agenda.

In Ward 34, which is situated in Arcadia, concern was expressed by the ward councillor that complaints were received that members of the ward committee were under the influence of alcohol while performing their duties. The fact that the ward councillor was notified is critical to the envisaged improved communication between the Municipality and the general public since the ward committees are the closest to the people and need to interact with them on a daily basis. Therefore, ward committee members who resort to such misbehaviours need to be removed immediately, because they would tarnish the image of the Municipality and the Council as a whole.

Most of the ward committees that have been analysed expressed their disappointment at the way the Municipality informed them that their terms of
office would end on 11 September 2009 and stated that the Municipality had shown no appreciation for the fact that they had volunteered to assist the Municipality in the service delivery process. This is unfortunate, because the ward committee members had to sacrifice time with their families in order to carry out their duties and did not receive compensation. Most of the ward committee members would not make themselves available for another term, so all their knowledge and experience in dealing with the public regarding municipal matters would be lost.

By examining the above, it must be stated that the goals behind the establishment of the ward committees in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality were sound and developmentally oriented. However, if one considers the variety and seriousness of the challenges that these committees faced, it must be stated that most of those goals were not achieved. Legislation requires a municipality to capacitate its ward committee members, which this municipality has done, but to what extent it succeeded in achieving the desired results remains questionable.

There are wards, such as Ward 11 in Schauderville, and throughout the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality that were functioning well and were contributing positively to the improvement of the general welfare of all three parties involved in local government, i.e. the politicians, the officials and the general public. However, if one considers the various challenges raised in the minutes of the ward committee meetings, it is sufficient to say that the Municipality needs to equip ward committee members much more with the relevant skills and also to create an enabling environment for them to improve the communication lines between the Municipality and the public as envisaged by legislation.

The fact that the ward committees have not been functioning since 11 September 2009 shows that there is indeed a lack of political will to improve public participation. That fact was confirmed by the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs and this gave rise to the adoption of the
Outcome 9 document which clearly states that there is a need to improve the model of ward committees at local government level. If one looks at the State of Local Government Report as initiated by the aforementioned Department and later adopted by government, it is evident that local government is indeed in distress. Public protests over the lack of services or poor service delivery are the order of the day which also gave rise to the adoption of the Municipal Turnaround Strategy that needs to be developed by all municipalities in South Africa. In conclusion, ward committees are the eyes and ears of the municipality at the grass-roots level and mechanisms need to be put in place by the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality that would ensure the effective and efficient functioning of these committees in all the wards.

3.2. Analysis of the Oversight Committee’s Annual Reports

By analysing the Annual Reports of the Oversight Committee of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality over the past two years (2007/08 and 2008/09 Annual Reports of the Oversight Committee), focusing on public participation in particular, a number of observations as set out below were made. Since the researcher works as a Committee Secretary at the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, he could access the aforementioned reports, which are public documents, from the papertrail system.

In the Oversight Committee’s Annual Report for the 2007/08 financial year the researcher observed that, with regard to Constituency Services, the following recommendations have been made:

(i) That public participation be well planned, budgeted and implemented.
(ii) That timeous notices be given of public participation meetings.
(iii) That there be proper minute taking, processing of the issues by the administration and feedback to the communities on how the issues raised by them have been addressed.
(iv) That the issue of fruitless expenditure caused by the publication, cancellation, and republication of public participation meetings be addressed and that a progress report in this regard be compiled and submitted to the next Oversight Committee meeting.

(v) That the venues chosen for public participation meetings be as close as possible to the relevant communities so as to promote maximum participation and access.

(vi) That timeous notice be given of public participation meetings, including the meetings conducted by the Oversight Committee with the community.

By examining the above, it is evident that the municipal officials do not adhere to the requirements of Chapter four in the Municipal Systems Act and this prompted the recommendations that were made in the 2007/08 Annual Report of the Oversight Committee.

With regard to the Annual Report of the 2008/09 financial year the following comments were made by the members of the said committee:

(i) The public needed to have proper and comprehensive responses and feedback regarding their concerns over service delivery. It was noted that the minutes taken of the public participation meetings had not been circulated or made available. Furthermore, all directorates are affected by the public participation programme. The Executive Director: Corporate Services reported that the recommendations in respect of public participation made at portfolio committee level still needed to be reported to the Oversight Committee.

(ii) The failure to undertake a review of the performance and functionality of ward committees and to develop an amended model/framework and terms of reference to improve their functionality is a matter of concern. This point shows that there is a lack of will by the officials to improve public
consultation since ward committees are central to meaningful community consultation.

(iii) There is a lack of adequate and integrated communication and poor planning around public participation processes. This refers to the fact that the municipal directorates do not have an integrated approach with regard to how the concerns of the communities are addressed and in terms of the responses given with regard to the concerns raised by the public. It is therefore important for directorates to be well represented at public meetings in order for the correct information to be provided to the public since this matter borders on the creation of expectations, which, if not properly managed, could lead to public protests.

(iv) The fact that although ward committees were legislated, they were not functioning in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality was a cause for concern. Notwithstanding the fact that the Oversight Committee acknowledges this issue, it has not made concrete proposals in terms of how to address the issue and this shows the lack of political will to engage more effectively with the communities.

(v) There was a concern around the non-implementation of Oversight Committee recommendations for the 2007/08 Annual Report by, amongst others, the Executive Director for Corporate Services around the Constituency Services matters. This point is central to the question of whether there is a political will towards improved community consultations. It shows that notwithstanding the recommendations made by the Oversight Committee, the ruling party did not even request explanations from the executive director in charge of public participation for the poor performance in respect thereof.
(vi) Councillors were not informed timeously when public meetings were cancelled, emphasising that those councillors who were required to chair these public meetings should be informed of this well in advance. This point also related to non-compliance by the Municipality with regard to Chapter four of the Municipal Systems Act since these late cancellations have financial implications on the institution.

(vii) Members of the local community express concern, amongst others, that there is a general lack of response by ward councillors and officials to the concerns raised by communities. This point also affirms the researchers’ statement that the Municipality was not adhering to the legislative requirements in the Municipal Systems Act.

(viii) Ward councillors should hold public meetings with their constituents before the Municipality’s public participation process commences. This would provide the communities with relevant information in respect of the objectives of the meetings and as such would lead to meaningful inputs being made by the public.

(ix) Full feedback should be given to the community and councillors in respect of the public participation meetings. This point also affirms the researchers’ viewpoint that the municipal officials did not provide the public with reports subsequent to the public meetings.

(x) The Acting Chairperson who was a member of the ruling party in the Municipality stated that additional public participation meetings would increase the workload of both the Oversight Committee’s members and officials and wards had been clustered together to create a more efficient process.
By looking at the above challenges, as noted by the Oversight Committee of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, it can be stated that the public participation process as implemented, is laden with challenges that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency given the fact that there are widespread public protests resulting from poor communication either by officials or politicians, and sometimes by both parties. The Oversight Committee needed to be established by Council as provided for by legislation but it was disturbing that the comments and recommendations made by that Committee, in particular those relating to public participation and constituency services, had not been implemented by the officials. The last point in the above summary is also cause for concern. It could be stated that there is a general lack of commitment towards effective public participation by the ruling political party within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, especially given the fact that the officials who had not implemented the recommendations had not been taken to task by Council. This gives rise to the impression that the need for efficiency and effectiveness is not considered to be of paramount importance when public participation meetings are arranged within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

3.3. Concluding remarks

By examining the above, it could be stated that there were too many concerns emanating from the ward committee and the Oversight Committee meetings that needed to be addressed. The concerns raised signified the lack of commitment towards improved public participation and consultation. The following chapter would provide the reader with an analysis of the research findings that resulted from the interviews with the public, the ward committee member and the senior officials from the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher attended a public meeting in Gelvandale on 27 October 2010, where numerous complaints were raised about the short notice given for the meeting and the fact that the loud-hailing only took place on the very day of the meeting. The researcher also observed the fruitless and wasteful expenditure that occurred because of buses being hired to transport people from the various neighbourhoods but most of them being empty upon arrival at the meeting. Between forty and fifty members of the public belonging to six wards, i.e. Wards 7, 10, 11, 12, 31 and 32, attended that particular public meeting. Inevitably, the question arises: How does the Municipality expect fruitful and meaningful inputs from the public at public meetings if the basic requirement of giving proper notice of a meeting is so woefully neglected? Yes, transport was arranged in this instance, but the people for whom it was intended were not adequately informed of the meeting. Against this background, this study has sought to gauge the effectiveness of public participation in the Northern Areas of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality.

The objective of this chapter is to provide the reader with the main findings emanating from the interview process with the public and ward councillors and the elite interviews with the municipal employees, whereafter recommendations would be made.

4.1. Findings

In respect of the first question in the elite interviews, it was found that the Municipality was not making enough funding available for adequate public participation. It was also found that the various Directorates within the institution needed to make more budgetary provisions for public participation and that the
Constituency Services Directorate would currently only facilitate the process. Since 2004, the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality has been the leading municipality in South Africa in terms of public participation. The reason for that relates to the resources committed to public participation between 2002 and 2007 when it was a priority within the institution. The Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality excelled in terms of public participation during that period and achieved a score of 8 out of 10. That scenario has however changed after 2007 when the Municipality’s ranking in respect of public participation dropped because of a lack of support and funding. The respondents also mentioned that there was a lack of support from both politicians and officials, with public participation being treated as a legislative compliance requirement. For instance, one of the respondents stated that “the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality did not have clear strategies and objectives in place that would ensure that communities were exposed to the matters of the institution”.

Another respondent in an elite interview noted that “the current model of public participation within the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality was not addressing the core objectives of capacitating and empowering people in respect of the processes and challenges facing the Municipality, and that that was the reason for the surge in public protests in the area since people were not kept abreast of all the issues affecting service delivery.”

With reference to the question of whether the staff component of the Municipality was sufficient to deal with public participation when one considers the large geographic area to be covered, most of the respondents stated that the staff complement was not sufficient for an institution serving an area consisting of 60 wards and several peri-urban areas within which 1.1 million people had to be reached in terms of information and consultation. The Municipality was therefore not fully achieving its objectives, since some areas like Colchester and Seaview (on the outskirts of Port Elizabeth/Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality) were being left out of the public participation process. It was noted, however, that the Constituency Services Directorate was working with the ward councillors’
assistants and the political structures on the ground with a view to improving the communication channels between the Municipality and the public, given the fact that the ward committees had not been operating since 11 September 2009.

Regarding the question relating to what happened with reports emanating from public meetings, one of the respondents stated that “the reports were gathering dust in the offices and nobody was processing them into action plans that needed to be developed to address the issues raised by the communities”. On the other hand, one of the respondents stated that the reports were indeed distributed to the various Directorates and were also reported to Council but that there were shortcomings, such as a lack of secretarial services to present the notes in a structured format that would enable the officials to compile quality reports. The contradiction in responses could be due to the fact that one of the respondents worked in the Constituency Services Directorate and could therefore respond favourably to the question since the respondent would not want the interviewer to get the impression that his Directorate was performing its duties. The other respondents were not working in the Constituency Services Directorate and as such responded to the question in terms of what they have observed to be common practice within the institution. The fact that the Oversight Committee also notes that there was not adequate feedback to communities and the Council in respect of the outcomes of the public meetings also affirms that the reports were in fact not distributed to all directorates within the institution and also to the public.

On the question of the political will to engage more with the public in respect of the quality of service delivery, one of the respondents felt that there had not been the necessary political will. One of the reasons for that being the differences within the ruling party. One respondent felt that “there might be a political will, but when one talks about commitment it is something else because if there was commitment, adequate funding and resources would be put in place for improved public participation.” It was reasoned that if the Municipality was interacting
continuously with the communities there would not be as many public protests within its area of jurisdiction. Another point that was made was that all portfolio committee meetings were open to the public, so that there was transparency, but that the public was not allowed to speak at portfolio committee meetings. Therefore it can be stated that there is political will but to a limited extent because if there was a genuine will to engage more with the public, adequate funding and resources would be put in place to ensure that public participation was more effective and efficient.

One of the respondents felt that the clustering of wards was not doing justice to the purpose and objectives of the public participation programme because it led to confusion since the various wards had different needs and priorities. The point was made that the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality’s public participation programme had been amended five times at the request of the politicians and that they also wanted to shorten the programme from 21 days to 4 days. It was argued that this was indicative of a lack of political will by the politicians to account to the communities in respect of the level of services being rendered to them since politicians did not view public participation as important and vital to improved service delivery. It was generally felt that the clustering of wards was problematic because all the wards had different needs, and confusion could easily arise among officials about which comments or inputs related to which particular ward in a cluster, to the detriment of service delivery. This point is critical since it impacts on the quality of communication with the communities at the public meetings and needs to be addressed. In the analysis of the Oversight Committee’s recommendations for the 2007/08 financial year, it also stated that public meetings must be brought closer to the wards and this would ensure relevant and meaningful inputs being made by the public with less distortions of information.

It was widely felt that good public participation did indeed lead to improved service delivery since the communities were given a chance to express their
views on the level of services rendered to them. In this way, the number of violent public protests could be reduced since the people were part of the development processes from the initiation phase. One of the respondents made the point that there was an advantage in involving the communities before documents like the IDP and municipal policies were developed because they would be involved from the outset and this would reduce inadvertent omissions from the documents. The problem with taking draft documents to the public was that the documents had already been compiled by officials or consultants and this tended to narrow the focus when the documents were presented to the public for input and comments. This gave the public the impression that the comments or inputs to be made revolved solely around what was already contained in the draft documents. Therefore, documents needed to be formulated around the experiences of the communities and the communities needed to be involved from the outset of the development process instead of just being consulted, which is in line with the third typology to public participation developed by Pretty, Guijet, Scoones and Thompson (1995) in the literature review. This typology notes that professionals define both the problem and the solution, thus narrowing the focus of the topic being consulted upon with the communities.

With regard to the question relating to whether public participation as provided for under the current legislation led to improved or delayed service delivery, it was generally felt that under current legislation, public participation would lead to improved service delivery, but that the Municipality was not adhering to the provisions of the Municipal Systems Act and that that led to the communities feeling that they were not being furnished with adequate information, which was part of the reason for the violent public protests. One respondent stated that “the benefits derived from public participation far outweighed the time spent on the processes and that implementation thereof could be easily implemented if the processes were properly executed as required by legislation, and if adequate resources were provided”. Thus, if one considers the number of protests relating to service delivery in recent years it could be deduced that the resources allocated towards improved service delivery would be far less compared to
damages that derive from some of the protests where there are reported cases of clinics being burnt to the ground and where municipal vehicles are being destroyed.

The general public and councillors felt that most of the public meetings were merely talk shops and that the concerns raised by the public at those meetings were not being addressed and no adequate feedback in the form of reports were forthcoming subsequent to the meetings. The point was made that the municipal officials did attempt to respond to questions raised at the public meetings, but that nothing was being done afterwards to address the concerns raised. The communities would then hold the ward councillor accountable for the responses given by the officials, especially if expectations had been created by such responses. Therefore, ward councillors need to make concerted efforts to bring these issues to the attention of the municipal officials in order for the former to address the issues as promised to the communities.

In response to questions five and six, there were mixed reactions from the general public and ward councillors since some of them felt that the public did receive sufficient notice of public meetings by means of loud-hailing. Other respondents felt, however, that in most cases short notice was given to the public, causing the low turnout. More respondents felt that the notice given in respect of public meetings was not sufficient since one day was not a sufficient notice period. It must however be stated that the respondents who felt that a one day notice period was sufficient were either former ward committee members who were unemployed and as such did have enough time to attend public meetings even if the notice was late. The other respondents who noted that the period was not sufficient were employed and therefore needed more time to make the necessary arrangements to attend the public meetings.
4.2 Recommendations

The internal capacity of the Municipality needs to be strengthened in order to ensure that all reports emanating from public meetings as well as ward committee meetings are disseminated throughout the institution. The reports emanating from public meetings also need to be tabled at the newly established Municipal Public Accounts Committee, to ensure that municipal processes are adequately scrutinised in terms of accountability and transparency before submission to Council. Alternatively, all ward committees could report to the Council via the Office of the Speaker.

A monitoring mechanism needs to be developed in order to track the progress made by Directorates in respect of the concerns raised by the communities at the public and ward committee meetings. The Constituency Services Directorate needs to appoint a person solely dedicated to monitoring the progress made by the Directorates and responding to enquiries made by either ward councillors, ward committee members, or the public regarding the same.

All the requirements as provided for in Chapter four of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act need to be adhered to in order to ensure effective and efficient public participation throughout the Northern Areas and the Municipality as a whole. More financial resources must be invested in public participation in order to ensure that all the requirements as per the above recommendation are achieved. Similarly, the Municipality should do more to empower the ward committee members in respect of the governance processes of the Municipality, which would in turn ensure that they are able to attend to queries raised by the communities and also to provide the correct direction in dealing with issues within wards. Paramount to the effective functioning of ward committees throughout the Municipality is the ability of ward councillors’ assistants to produce minutes of meetings that are of a high quality. This would enable the officials to process the minutes quicker for dissemination to the various directorates. The Municipality's
Secretariat Division could be used to mentor all the ward committee secretaries and this process could also provide a career path for the ward committee secretaries as the same could be used as a feeding system for the Secretariat Division.

Taking into account the extensive geographic area of the wards within the Northern Areas of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, it is reasonable to say that ten ward committees are not adequate to deal with the needs of these communities. It can also be stated that in some wards, the ward committee members are not dispersed throughout the ward, which leads to the isolation of certain sectors within a ward and this also causes apathy by the communities since they feel that the ward councillor and the ward committee do not have their interests at heart in the service rendering process. Therefore, the number of ward committee members should be determined by the constituency of interest groups within a ward, which could be promoted by the establishment of sub-committees within wards. For instance, a sub-committee could be established, which only deals with housing matters within a ward. An example of this is the arrangement in Ward 11 where the citizens established an Informal Settlement Network in order to deal with housing-related issues within the Ward and to discuss those matters that need to be taken up with the relevant municipal directorates.

The municipal officials need to put more effort and energy into arranging public meetings. The loud-hailing needs to be done in conjunction with the placing of advertisements in local newspapers as well as at the community spaza shops visited by most of the residents, and also at shopping centres and taxi ranks.

Political instability within a municipality is intensified during the run-up to a local government election. There is reason to believe that such a situation currently exists in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. It is also well known that there is an element of mistrust between communities on political grounds. For that reason, it is suggested that the Municipality’s Security Sub-directorate should
take over loud-hailing duties in the communities. In that way, all community members, irrespective of political affiliation, would feel free to attend public meetings on an equal footing. All public meetings need to be held at venues situated as close as possible to the public. The clustering of wards should be reviewed since it impacts negatively on the focus of inputs made by the public. Therefore, adequate time must be allocated by both the officials and the politicians to ensure that in the public participation programmes of the Municipality the particular needs of each community are treated with the attention they deserve.

The Municipality needs to undertake a review of the performance and functionality of all the ward committees and develop an amended model/framework and terms of reference to improve their functionality. The infighting within ward committees need to be addressed and the incentives such as the travelling allowances and the stationery need to be increased in order to motivate them.

An Integrated Public Participation Strategy must be developed by the Constituency Services Directorate, which would address all the challenges that hinder good public participation as prescribed by legislation. This strategy needs to be adopted and adhered to by both the administration and the politicians in order to enable the Municipality to improve its public image that has been tarnished by the violent public protests over recent years.

The public participation process must be well planned, budgeted for and implemented and timeous and proper notice must be given of public participation meetings. Proper minute-taking is essential, and the processing of issues by the administration and feedback to the communities on how such issues were addressed needs to be improved, as provided for in the Municipal Systems Act.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

The study demonstrated that given the fact that the dissolution of the ward committees in September 2009 had serious repercussions in respect of public participation and the municipality’s communication with the general public, it would be interesting to see whether any of the issues raised in this treatise had been addressed to date since the Constituency Services Directorate had more than sufficient time to re-evaluate its model for ward committees with a view to improving it.

Some of the provisions in Chapter four of the Municipal Systems Act are not being complied with by the Municipality. The Executive Mayor needs to take responsibility for that, since public participation touches on everything relating to the functions of the Municipality. The fact that the Municipality does not have a policy in place around public participation shows the lack of commitment in respect of this function on the part of the politicians, since it is their role to initiate that process. The clustering of wards for public meetings shows that the ruling political party in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality has replaced quality for quantity in order to reduce the time spent on public participation meetings. It could therefore be stated that the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality does not fully comply with the legislation given the fact that there are no reports disseminated to the communities subsequent to the public participation meetings.

The Executive Mayor needs to be applauded for his efforts to bring the Municipality closer to the Northern Areas, as is evident by his step to open a Mayoral office in the Cleary Park Shopping Centre in the heart of the Northern Areas. It must, however, be stated that notwithstanding the efforts made by the Executive Mayor, the formal municipal accountability system in the Nelson
Mandela Bay Municipality is ineffective and in most cases not accessible to many of the citizens in the Northern Areas of the Municipality.

The public also has a crucial role to play in the rendering of services and as such has an obligation to attend public meetings and to be involved in the decision-making processes of the Municipality. Since the public is now also viewed as a member of local government, it is imperative for all members of the public to report any issues that need to be addressed and also initiate programmes or actions that would lead to the improvement of the general public wellbeing.

Even though there is a political will to engage the public on a continuous basis in respect of issues affecting them, there needs to be a commitment from both the politicians and the municipal officials to ensure that the public participation processes are carried out effectively and efficiently. The absence of the ward committees since September 2009 has also had a negative impact on the effectiveness of the public participation since these committees are closest to the people on the ground and could therefore relay the issues or challenges as experienced by the latter to the Municipality for mitigation.

The reports emanating from the public and ward committee meetings are disseminated to the various directorates within the Municipality but there are concerns around the time it takes directorates to attend to the issues raised by the public. Therefore, a mechanism needs to be put in place that would monitor the progress and time it takes for directorates to attend to the issues raised by the public at the public participation meetings.

The Municipal Systems Act extends the definition of municipality to include residents and communities within the municipal area, working in partnership with the municipality’s political and administrative structures. This relationship is fundamental to sound and effective governance, and the long-term sustainability of local government. Therefore, public participation is the governance process
that would enable the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality to foster a sound relationship between the two role-players in the delivery of sustainable services. This also creates a bottom-up process of driving development and improving the level of services rendered by the Municipality. However, the realisation of the last point is somewhat uncertain, since the Municipality tends to take pre-developed draft policy documents to the communities for input and comment. These comments may, or may not, be taken into account when adopting the final documents. Therefore, the Municipality is acting in contrast to the objectives of the Municipal Systems Act.

By examining the way in which public participation is implemented by the administrative arm of the Municipality, it could be stated that public meetings are merely held as a legislative compliance. There is an element of capacity building but it does not suffice since workshops need to be held with communities before critical strategic documents are taken to them for consultation. This process would enable the communities to make meaningful and relevant inputs at the public meetings and not merely voice general complaints about municipal service delivery.

A point of concern is the fact that ward councillors are not convening regular public meetings with their constituents. This leads to an element of mistrust creeping in since the communities are not being kept abreast of developments taking place within their wards, but instead only see contractors arriving on site. This issue is critical since projects could be held at ransom by irate communities who do not trust the motives of the ward councillors and it could also lead to construction sites being abandoned by contractors due to violent community members, as was experienced with the upgrading of the van der Kemps Kloof project at the beginning of 2010.

Active citizenship and citizen organisation is critical since this would enable communities to hold local government accountable in respect of decisions taken
by the politicians. The fact that Non-Political Forums are being established in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and these forums are demanding that the Municipality account to the ratepayers in respect of how municipal funds are spent or they would withhold their rates and service charges speaks volumes. This point is of paramount importance since the ratepayers have the right to demand value for money as provided for under the Batho Pele principles.

By examining the content analysis of the ward committee meetings held within the Northern Areas, it is sufficient to say that the findings confirm the issues raised in the Delivery Agreement for Outcome 9 and also confirm that there is definitely a lack of institutional support by the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality for ward committees.

It is sufficient to say that the communities in the Northern Areas of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality do feel included in the public participation process even though the public meetings are being organised in an efficient and effective manner. Most of the people interviewed during this study felt that good public participation would indeed improve service delivery in the Northern Areas and would also drastically reduce the public protests that have been experienced in recent years.

In the processes involved in the development of municipal documents such as the Integrated Development Plan, the Municipality needs to use interactive participation methods and include the public from the outset. This would improve the quality of documents being developed and the public would also be made aware of all the challenges facing the Municipality. For instance, if the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality had consulted with the communities in respect of the cash-flow challenges that it currently has to contend with, possible frustration over projects that might have to be put on hold could have been lessened. In that way, the Municipality would have created a better understanding and trust between itself and the communities.
Finally, the researcher wishes to express the hope that this study may assist the communities of the Northern Areas to fulfil their role as partners in local government.
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APPENDICES
Appendix 1: Map of Nelson Mandela Bay: Northern Areas
Appendix 2: Interview Schedule
Appendix 3: Draft Framework for Coordination of the work of the Constituency Coordinator’s Directorate
APPENDIX 2

The list of possible questions that will be asked in the interviews with the public is as follows:

1. Is the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality making formal structures of public participation available to all communities within this area?
2. Is there adequate feedback by officials and politicians in relation to questions asked within the public meetings?
3. How is the municipality responding to the concerns raised by the community members in public meetings?
4. In your own view, does public participation lead to improved service delivery within the municipality?
5. Are public meetings being organized in an effective manner?
6. Do communities get sufficient notification of public meetings?
7. In your own view, does the clustering of wards affect the efficiency of public meetings? If positively, please state your reasons. If negatively, please state your reasons.

Possible questions that will be asked in the elite interviews are as follows:

1. Is the municipality making adequate funding available for effective and efficient participation and consultation with communities?
2. Taking the wide geographic area into account, is the staff component sufficient to deal with public participation throughout the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality?
3. What is being done with the reports emanating from public meetings?
4. Is there a political will to engage more with the public in respect of the quality of service delivery?
5. In your own view, does public participation and consultation as provided for in the current legislation lead to improved service delivery or to a delay in service delivery? Please elaborate.
APPENDIX 3

DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR COORDINATION OF THE WORK OF THE CONSTITUENCY COORDINATOR’S DIRECTORATE,

1. INTRODUCTION.

The Constituency Coordinator is a member of the Executive Mayoral Committee. Executive Mayoral Committee sits fortnightly. Executive Mayoral Committee member attends and participates in both Mayoral Committee (Caucuses) and Council meetings (Caucuses). The Work of the Constituency Coordinator is more of facilitating and coordinating linkage and partnership in general public participation strategies and methods as well as institutional transformation for the best interests of the Special Sectors and Public participation.

The Constituency Coordinator is a support office to the Executive Mayor and constant briefing and interactions should be regulated in consultation with the political collective of Councillors for children, women, older persons, persons with disabilities and youth. The designated officials headed by Office Director from the different units of Community Outreach, Ward Committee, Councillor Coordination and Special Sectors are required to play an advisory, administrative support and activism roles to the work of the political leadership led by Constituency Coordinator.

2. CONTENT.

2.1. STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF THE CONSTITUENCY COORDINATOR’S OFFICE.

The office generally performs public participation and special sectors development and empowerment matters that cut across all happenings of the institution and society. The Constituency Coordinator’s office that is comprised of Special Sectors (Gender & Women, Children, Older Persons, Persons With Disabilities and Youth), Community Outreach and Ward Committee acts as a link between Council and communities as well as deals with internal and external transformation.

The contents of discussions will be informed by Constituency Coordinator's strategic priorities through the respective units guided by the overall strategic direction of Council (as informed by the ruling party manifesto and other duly adopted policy positions). The Executive Mayor's inaugural statement made it very clear that sectors will feature in every agenda of council structures. This is an attempt to assist Council and its leadership to align their programmes and plans into that vision. The adopted 2010/11 IDP and Budget speak very loudly on the vision hence partnerships and close coordination between respective offices and Constituency should be tightened in order to prevent silo implementations.
2.2. STRATEGIC PARTNERS FOR EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY.

The alignment and collaborative coordination will be implemented together with the following structures:

a. Office of the Executive Mayor.

b. Office of the Chief Whip.

c. Office of the Speaker where necessary.

d. Portfolio Chairpersons / EIVICMs and relevant officials.

e. Strategic political offices.

f. Sector Forum structures.

g. (Clustered) ward community structures.

h. Other spheres of government structures.

i. Councillors and general communities.

j. Private sector and Civil Society structures.

2.3. STRATEGIC COOPERATIVE COLLABORATION MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLATFORMS.

In an effort to ensure mainstreaming and close coordination of public participation are driven by the collective of council, the following should be mechanisms to be followed throughout:

(1) The Constituency Coordinator should convene monthly meetings with Desk Councillors and senior officials of Constituency Services every first Tuesday of the month from 09:00 - 13:00.

(ii) The Constituency Coordinator should together with the Office Director in the presence of the Chief of Staff have monthly staff meetings every last Wednesday in a month from 07:30 - 09:30,

(iii) The Constituency Coordinator may on a monthly basis have regular clustered bilateral meetings every second Tuesday of the month from 08:30 - 10:00.
(iv) Joint staff meetings of the Executive Mayor’s office and that of the Constituency will be held every second month on the first Monday of the month from 08:30 - 10:30.

(v) The Constituency Coordinator will on a fortnight basis have formal briefing sessions every first Monday of the month with the Executive Mayor from 08:30 - 09:30.

(vi) The Executive Mayor and Constituency Coordinator will be ex-officio members of the joint staff meeting of the two offices.

(vii) The Constituency Coordinator together with Desk Councillors and senior officials will have quarterly meetings every third Thursday of the month from 09:00 - 16:00.

A minimum of 6 Cluster meetings will then be convened quarterly on the last week of the month with all clustered ward community structures at 10:00 and 17:00.

(x) Sectoral Working Groups will then be convened with full presence of the Executive Mayor, Constituency Coordinator, Desk Councillors and senior officials of the Constituency Coordinator and the Executive Mayors offices every fourth month on the first Friday of the month from 11:00 - 13:00.

(x) Officials will on a weekly basis provide synopsis of the work carried out during the course of the week every Friday in writing by no later than 15:00.

(xi) The same would happen in a consolidated form every month.

(xii) Officials would submit their quarterly reports for the consideration of the political leadership and the Council of Sector Forum structures and Clustered ward structures including Council structures on dates determined by the Head of the Directorate.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS.

3.1. It is recommended that all officials prepare presentations on their plans of action for consideration by the political leadership at the latest on Friday, 15 October 2010 from 08:00 - 15:00

The above stated mechanisms be adopted for implementation so as to streamline work of the Constituency Coordinator’s office in influencing the direction of the institution and strengthened partnership with internal and external stakeholders,
3.3. The establishment of the Mainstreaming Sub Committee that will coordinate overlapping matters and those falling within the cracks as well as facilitate and coordinate necessary interventions where each of the offices may not have a common approach on a specific issue; e.g. Equity implementation. Corporate Social Investment/Responsibility strict compliance. Tender management for special sectors, etc.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS,

The intention of this framework is to promote mandate and accountability, clear operational areas for officials, structured and streamlined relationship with strategic political offices including clarified collaborative cooperation between the Constituency Coordinator’s office and other Directorates.

All tasks whether is national pride and observance dates, community workshops, empowerment and development workshops, mainstreaming sessions. project facilitation and coordination. policy development and reviews must all happen in the parameters of meeting targets that at the end of the term would be met_