

Towards Good Governance, Ethical Conduct and Integrity in The Second Decade Of Democracy In South Africa

DDP / UKZN Conference, 16 - 17 October 2006

Ethical conduct and integrity is an integral part of local governance in South Africa as it is critical to the process of efficient and effective service delivery. More specifically, ethical behavior is the ultimate in terms of excellence in local government as it has a positive impact on total quality management, customer services management, employee empowerment and citizen participation. In this context, the greatest responsibilities and challenges for a municipal manager in his/her quest for excellence and ultimately good local governance are to set and abide by exemplary ethical standards thereby serving as a role model for the municipality and the local citizenry.

There has been a marked increase in unethical conduct and corruption in local government in South Africa in the past five years. This has however been a global trend and this phenomenon has been experienced in both developed and developing countries. The Government has acknowledged that the matter has to be addressed as a matter of urgency in South Africa as it impacts negatively on service delivery. The Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) provides the constitutional basis for promoting ethical conduct. The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) has ushered in a code of conduct for councilors, while the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) has introduced a code of ethics for officials. It is expected that the above-mentioned codes will present challenges to both local politicians and officials in setting up the ideals of an ethical and corruption free - environment in local government. Within this framework and the broader context of local governance, the community and municipal functionaries will have to seriously take cognizance of the institutional and administrative measures on hand to enhance ethical conduct and at the same time counter corruption. The curbing of corruption and enhancing of ethical conduct would, in the final analysis, ensure that the public interest is promoted and protected by addressing the needs and desires of the local citizenry. It should be noted that acts of corruption do not happen in a vacuum.

Quite often, they are carried out when there are lax controls and no clear hierarchical structure of accountability. Consequently, the emphasis should in the long term be on the efficient and effective functioning of municipalities in addition to investigating corruption.

The corrupt behaviour and unethical conduct of municipal functionaries has impacted negatively on the resources of municipalities and more importantly on service delivery. The large number of public protests witnessed nationally bears ample testimony to this. There is an urgent need to enhance ethical conduct, counter corruption and instill a culture of good governance in South African local government. It is proposed that a two day conference be hosted jointly by the Democracy Development Programme and the School of Public Administration of the University of KwaZulu Natal on the 16-17 October 2006 to address this critical issue.

It will focus on inter alia, four thematic issues:

- Good Governance and Public Accountability in Local Government
- Ethics and Integrity in Local Government
- Codes of Conduct in Local Government and Corruption in Local Government

The Conference will highlight “best practices” and possible lessons in the context of good local governance.