



COST CONTAINMENT POLICY

FINAL 2024/25

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

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1. DEFINITIONS

In this policy, a word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the Act has the same meaning as in the Act, unless the context indicates otherwise, and-

"Act"	means the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act No. 56 of 2003);
"consultant"	means a professional person, individual, partnership, corporation, or a company appointed to provide technical and specialist advice or to assist with a design and implementation of projects or to assist a municipality or municipal entity to perform its functions to achieve the objects of local government in terms of section 152 of the Constitution;
"Cost containment"	means measures implemented to curtail spending in terms of these regulations; and
"Credit card"	means a card issued by a financial services provider, which creates a revolving account and grants a line of credit to the cardholder.
“Accounting Officer”	A person appointed in terms of section 82(1) (a) or (b) of the Municipal Structures Act; and also refers to the municipal manager of the municipality in terms of section 60 of the MFMA.
“CFO”	means the Chief Financial Officer of Umhlabuyalingana Local Municipality, a person designated in terms of section 80(2)(a) of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act,56 of 2003.
“GRAP”	means the Generally Recognised Accounting Standards.
“Municipal Manager”	means a person appointed as the Accounting Officer of Umhlabuyalingana Local Municipality.
“Municipality”	means Umhlabuyalingana Local Municipality.
“Austerity Measures”	refer to official actions taken by the government entity, during a period of adverse economic conditions, to bring its expenditures in line with revenues generated using a combination of spending cuts and/or cost saving initiatives;
“IDP”	Integrated Development Plan.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

- Is to prescribe cost containment measures for Umhlabuyalingana municipality In line with sections 62(1)(a), 78(1)(b), 95(a) and 105(1)(b) of the MFMA, which is to ensure that resources of a municipality are used effectively, efficiently and economically by implementing cost containment measures as contemplated in Treasury Regulation no 317 of 20019
- To give effect and regulate cost containment measures (austerity measures) in terms of expenditure incurred by the municipality in the process of carrying out Council business and discharging its duties for purposes of service delivery, taking into account that:
 - Limited resources should be used effectively, efficiently and in accordance with the approved budget and related financial policies as determined by Act,
 - Given the economic problem of scarcity, it is imperative that resources be applied effectively and efficiently to achieve economic and social objectives.

3. STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS (INTENT)

- The strategic priority areas of Umhlabuyalingana Local Municipality are enshrined in the Municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and are categorized into six priorities
- These priorities are namely,
 - (a) Job creation through economic development
 - (b) Improving citizens skills levels and education
 - (c) Improve quality of citizens health
 - (d) Integrated urban and rural development
 - (e) Creation of secure and friendly city through fighting crime
 - (f) Democratic, responsible, transparent, objective and equitable municipal governance and social cohesion.
- Sustainable and self-sufficient Local Municipality.

- This policy supports the Financially Sustainable Local Municipality pillar to maximize the Municipality's financial resources by ensuring long-term financial viability and sustainability, thus improving service delivery and giving impetus to the Municipality's vision "to be a catalyst for a sustainable socio-economic development for a better life for all".

4. DESIRED OUTCOMES

- The primary desired outcome of this policy is to ensure that the municipality complies with section 62(1) of the Municipal Finance Management Act read in conjunction with section 65 (1), the accounting officer of a municipality is responsible for managing the financial administration as well as the management of the expenditure of the municipality, and must for this purpose take all reasonable steps to ensure:
 - (a) that the resources of the municipality are used effectively, efficiently and economically;
 - (b) That the municipality's available working capital is managed effectively and economically in terms of the prescribed cash management and investment framework.

5. PURPOSE

- The purpose of this policy is to stipulate a process to be followed in implementing the austerity measures in the municipality in line with Treasury Regulations no 317 of 2019 which directs that, prime amongst other things-;
 - Accounting Officers must ensure that appropriate expenditure control measures are instituted
 - To provide reasonable assurance that all expenditure incurred by municipality is necessary,
 - Appropriate, paid promptly, recorded adequately and reported accordingly in the relevant accountability instruments.

6. APPLICATION OF THE POLICY

The policy apply to all officials and political office bearers in municipalities.

7. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- As directed by the Treasury regulation, it is mandatory that all government departments, constitutional institutions and public entities (including municipalities) implement the cost containment measures.
- This policy is in line with the above-mentioned Treasury Regulations and applies to Umhlabuyalingana Local Municipality.

8. POLICY PROVISIONS

8.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF COST CONTAINMENT MEASURES IN LINE WITH TREASURY REGULATION NO 317 OF 2019

8.1.1 Engagement of consultants

- The municipality may only contract consultants after a gap analysis has confirmed that the municipality does not have the requisite skills or resources in its full time employ to perform the function. Based on a business case, the appointment of consultants may only be approved by the accounting officer.
- The tender documentation for the appointment of consultants must include a clause that the remuneration rates will be subject to negotiation, not exceeding remuneration mentioned in sub-regulation(2) of Municipal Cost Containment Regulations 2019.
- Consultants may only be remunerated at the rates:
 - (a) determined in the "Guideline for fees", issued by the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA);
 - (b) set out in the "Guide on Hourly Fee Rates for Consultants", by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA); or
 - (c) prescribed by the body regulating the profession of the consultant.
- Travel and subsistence costs of consultants must be in accordance with national travel policy issued by National Department of Transport, as updated from time to time.
- All contracts of consultants must include penalty clauses for poor performance and in this regard, accounting officers and accounting authorities must invoke such clauses where deemed necessary.

- In line with Treasury Regulation 317 of Municipal Cost Containment Regulations of 2019, the municipality must develop consultancy reduction plans by 31 March of each year for implementation in the ensuing financial year. The first consultancy reduction plan required in terms of this *Policy* was developed in March 2021 for implementation in the 2021/2022 financial year.

8.1.2 Vehicles used for political office –bearers

- The threshold limit for vehicle purchases relating to official use by political office – bearers must not exceed R700 000 or 70% (VAT inclusive) of the total annual remuneration package for the different grades of municipalities, as defined in the Public Office Bearers Act and the notices issued in terms thereof by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, whichever is lower.
- The procurement of vehicles in sub –regulation 6 (1) of Municipal Cost Containment Regulations of 2019 must be undertaken using the national government transversal contract mechanism, unless it may be procured at a lower cost through other procurement mechanisms.
- Before deciding to procure a vehicle as contemplated in sub –regulation 6 (2) of Municipal Cost Containment Regulations of 2019, the accounting officer or delegated official must provide the council with information relating to the following Criteria, which must be considered:
 - (a) Status of current vehicles;
 - (b) Affordability of options including whether to procure a vehicle as compared to rental or hire thereof, if the most cost effective option is followed and the cost is equivalent to or lower than that contemplated in sub -regulation 6 (1) Municipal Cost Containment Regulations of 2019;
 - (c) Extent of service delivery backlogs;
 - (d) Terrain for effective usage of the vehicle; and
 - (e) Any other policy of council.

- If the rental referred to in sub -regulation 6 (3) Municipal Cost Containment Regulations of 2019 is preferred, the accounting officer must review the costs incurred regularly to ensure that value for money is obtained.
- Regardless of their usage, vehicles for official use by political office bearers may only be replaced after completion of 120 000 kilometres.
- Notwithstanding sub -regulation 6 (5) Municipal Cost Containment Regulations of 2019, a municipality or municipal entity may replace a vehicle for official use by political office bearers before the completion of 120 000km only in instances where the vehicle has a serious mechanical problem and is in a poor condition and subject to obtaining a detailed mechanical report by the vehicle manufacturer or approved dealer.
- An accounting officer must ensure that there is a policy that addresses the use of municipal vehicles for official use only.

8.1.3 Travel and subsistence

- An accounting officer –
 - (a) may approve the purchase of economy class tickets for all officials or political office bearers where the flying time for the flights is five hours or less; and
 - (b) may only approve the purchase of business class tickets for officials, political office bearers and persons reporting directly to the accounting officer for flights exceeding five hours.
- In the case of the accounting officer, the mayor may approve the purchase of economy tickets where the flying time is five hours or less and business class tickets for flights exceeding five hours. Notwithstanding sub -regulation (1) or (2) of Municipal Cost Containment Regulations of 2019, an accounting officer, or the mayor in the case of an accounting officer, may approve the purchase of business class tickets for an official or a political office bearer with a disability or a medically certified condition.
- The cost containment policy limit international travel to meetings or events that are considered critical. The number of officials or political office bearers attending such

meetings or events must be limited to those officials or political office bearers directly involved in the subject matter related to such meetings or events.

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

8.1.4 Domestic accommodation

- An accounting officer must ensure that costs incurred for domestic accommodation and meals are in accordance with the maximum allowable rates for domestic

accommodation and meals as communicated from time to time by the National Treasury through a notice.

- Overnight accommodation may only be booked where the return trip exceeds 500 kilometres.

8.1.5 Credit cards

- An accounting officer must ensure that no credit card or debit card linked to a bank account of a municipality is issued to any official or political office bearer, including members of the board of directors of municipal entities.
- Where officials or political office bearers incur expenditure in relation to official municipal activities, such officials or political officer bearers must use their personal credit cards or cash or arrangements made by the municipality and request reimbursement in accordance with the written approved policy and processes.

8.1.6 Sponsorships, events and catering

- A municipality may not incur catering expenses for meetings which are only attended by persons in the employ of the municipality or municipal entity, unless the prior written approval of the accounting officer is obtained.
- An accounting officer may incur catering expenses for the hosting of meetings, conferences, workshops, courses, forums, recruitment interviews, and proceedings of council that exceed five hours.
- Entertainment allowances of qualifying officials may not exceed two thousand rand per person per financial year, unless approved otherwise by the accounting officer.
- A municipality may not incur expenses on alcoholic beverages unless the municipality or the municipal entity recovers the cost from the sale of such beverages.
- An accounting officer must ensure that social events, team building exercises, year – end functions, sporting events and budget vote dinners are not financed from the municipality or the municipal entity's budgets or by any suppliers or sponsors.

- A municipality may not incur expenditure on corporate branded items like clothing or goods for personal use of officials, other than uniforms, office supplies and tools of trade unless costs related thereto are recovered from affected officials or is an integral part of the business model.
- An accounting officer may incur expenditure not exceeding the limits for petty cash usage to host farewell functions in recognition of officials who retire after serving the municipality or Communication
- A municipality may, as far as possible, advertise municipal related events on its website instead of advertising in magazines or newspapers.
- An accounting officer must ensure that allowances to officials for private calls and data costs are limited to an amount as determined by the accounting officer in the cost containment policy of the municipality.
- Newspapers and other related publications for the use of officials must be discontinued on expiry of existing contracts or supply orders, unless required for professional purposes and where unavailable in electronic format.
- A municipality may participate in the transversal term contract arranged by the National Treasury for the acquisition of mobile communication services.

8.1.7 Conferences, meetings and study tours

- An accounting officer must establish policies and procedures to manage applications to attend conferences or events hosted by professional bodies or non –governmental institutions held within and outside the borders of South Africa taking into account their merits and benefits, costs and available alternatives.

- When considering applications from officials or political office bearers to attend conferences or events within and outside the borders of South Africa, an accounting officer or mayor as the case may be, must take the following into account -
 - (a) the official's or political office bearer's role and responsibilities and the anticipated
 - (b) benefits of the conference or event;
 - (c) whether the conference or event addresses relevant concerns of the institution;
 - (d) the appropriate number of officials or political office bearers, not exceeding three,
 - (e) attending the conference or event; and
 - (d) the availability of funds to meet expenses related to the conference or event.
- An accounting officer may consider appropriate benchmark costs with other professional bodies or regulatory bodies prior to granting approval for an official to attend a conference or event within and outside the borders of South Africa.
- The benchmark costs referred to in sub -regulation (3) Municipal Cost Containment Regulations of 2019 may not exceed an amount as determined from time to time by the National Treasury through a notice.
- The amount referred to in sub -regulation (4) Municipal Cost Containment Regulations of 2019 excludes costs related to travel, accommodation and related expenses, but includes -
 - (a) conference or event registration expenses; and
 - (b) any other expense incurred in relation to the conference or event.
- When considering costs for conferences or events these may not include items such as laptops, tablets and other similar tokens that are built into the price of such conferences or

- The accounting officer of a municipality must ensure that meetings and planning sessions that entail the use of municipal funds are, as far as may be practically possible, held in- house.
- Municipal or provincial office facilities must be utilised for conference, meetings, strategic planning sessions, *inter alia*, where an appropriate venue exists within the municipal jurisdiction.
- An accounting officer must grant the approval for officials and in the case of political office bearers and the accounting officer, the mayor, as contemplated in sub -regulation (2) Municipal Cost Containment Regulations of 2019.
- A municipality must, where applicable, take advantage of early registration discounts by granting the required approvals to attend the conference, event or study tour, in advance.

8.1. 8 Other related expenditure items

- All commodities, services and products covered by a transversal contract concluded by the National Treasury must be considered before approaching the market, to benefit from
 - savings where lower prices or rates have been negotiated.
 - Municipal resources may not be used to fund elections, campaign activities, including the provision of food, clothing, printing of agendas and brochures and other inducements as part of, or during election periods or to fund any activities of any political party at any time.
- Expenditure on tools of trade for political office bearers must be limited to the upper limits as approved and published by the Cabinet member responsible for local government in terms of the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers Act, 1998.
- A municipality must avoid expenditure on elaborate and expensive office furniture.

- A municipality may only use the services of the South African Police Service to conduct periodical or quarterly security threat assessments of political office bearers and key officials and a report must be submitted to the speaker's office.
- A municipality or municipal entity may consider providing additional time -off in lieu of payment for overtime worked. Planned overtime must be submitted to the relevant manager for consideration on a monthly basis. A motivation for all unplanned overtime must be submitted to the relevant manager.
- A municipality or municipal entity must ensure that due process is followed when suspending or dismissing officials to avoid unnecessary litigation costs.

9. ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES

Failure to implement or comply with these Regulations may result in any official of the municipality or municipal entity, political office bearer or director of the board that authorised or incurred any expenditure contrary to these regulations being held liable for financial misconduct or a financial offence in the case of political office bearers as defined in Chapter 15 of the Act read with the Municipal Regulations on Financial Misconduct Procedures and Criminal Proceedings, 2014.

10. DISCLOSURES OF COST CONTAINMENT MEASURES

- The disclosure of cost containment measures applied by the municipality and municipal entity must be included in the municipal in -year budget reports and annual costs savings disclosed in the annual report.
- The measures implemented and aggregate amounts saved per quarter, together with the regular reports on reprioritisation of cost savings and on the implementation of the cost containment measures must be submitted to the Municipal Council for review and resolution. The municipal council can refer such reports to an appropriate Council Committee for further recommendations and actions.

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

11. CONTRADICTION WITH OTHER POLICY DOCUMENTS

Where any form of contradiction occurs between this policy and any other municipal policy or regulation, to the extent that provisions of this policy are not in any way in contravention with any legislation, provisions of this policy shall supersede such other municipal policy or regulation.

12. DEVIATIONS FROM THIS POLICY

Requests for deviations from provisions of this Policy may be considered upon written requests to the Accounting Officer, who, as the case may be must also consult with the Director General, National Treasury for purposes of seeking relaxation of a particular policy provision/s.

13. POLICY ADOPTION

This Policy has been considered and approved by the Council of Umhlabuyalingana Local Municipality on this day 17th of May 2024