

THABAZIMBI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



TARIFF POLICY

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PART 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE

A tariff policy must be compiled, adopted and implemented in terms of Section 74 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 2000, such policy to cover, among other things, the levying of fees for municipal services provided by the municipality itself or by way of service delivery agreements.

The tariffs policy has been compiled taking into account, where applicable, the guidelines set out in Section 74 (see part 9 of this policy).

In setting its annual tariffs the council shall at all times take due cognisance of the tariffs applicable elsewhere in the economic region, and of the impact which its own tariffs may have on local economic development.

PART 2: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Service tariffs imposed by the local municipality shall be viewed as user charges and shall not be viewed as taxes, and therefore the ability of the relevant consumer or user of the services to which such tariffs relate, shall not be considered as a relevant criterion (except in the case of the indigency relief measures approved by the municipality from time to time).

The municipality shall ensure that its tariffs are uniformly and fairly applied throughout the municipal region.

Tariffs for the four major services rendered by the municipality, namely:

- * electricity
- * water
- * sewerage (waste water)
- * refuse removal (solid waste),

shall as far as possible recover the expenses associated with the rendering of each service concerned. The tariff which a particular consumer or user pays shall therefore be directly related to the standard of service received and the quantity of the particular service used or consumed.

The municipality shall, as far as circumstances reasonably permit, ensure that the tariffs levied in respect of the foregoing services further generate an operating surplus each financial year of 10% or such lesser percentage as the council of the municipality may determine at the time that the annual operating budget is approved. Such surpluses shall be applied in relief of property rates and for the partial financing of general services or for the future capital expansion of the service concerned, or both. The modesty of such surplus shall prevent the service tariffs concerned from being viewed as concealed taxes.

The municipality shall develop, approve and at least annually review an indigency support programme for the municipal area. This programme shall set out clearly the municipality's cost recovery policy in respect of the tariffs which it levies on registered indigents, and the implications of such policy for the tariffs which it imposes on other users and consumers in the municipal region.

In line with the principles embodied in the Constitution and in other legislation pertaining to local government, the municipality may differentiate between different categories of users and consumers in regard to the tariffs which it levies. Such differentiation shall, however, at all times be reasonable, and shall be fully disclosed in each annual budget.

The municipality's tariff policy shall be transparent, and the extent to which there is cross-subsidisation between categories of consumers or users shall be evident to all consumers or users of the service in question.

The municipality further undertakes to ensure that its tariffs shall be easily explainable and understood by all consumers and users affected by the tariff policy concerned.

The municipality also undertakes to render its services cost effectively in order to ensure the best possible cost of service delivery.

In the case of directly measurable services, namely electricity and water, the consumption of such services shall be properly metered by the municipality, and meters shall be read, wherever circumstances reasonably permit, on a monthly basis. The charges levied on consumers shall be proportionate to the quantity of the service which they consume.

In addition, the municipality shall levy monthly availability charges for the services concerned, and these charges shall be fixed for each type of property as determined in accordance with the detailed policies set out below. Generally, consumers of water and electricity shall therefore pay two charges: one, relatively minor, which is unrelated to the volume of consumption and is levied because of the availability of the service concerned; and another directly related to the consumption of the service in question.

In considering the costing of its water, electricity and sewerage services, the municipality shall take due cognisance of the high capital cost of establishing and expanding such services, and of the resultant high fixed costs, as opposed to variable costs of operating these services. The municipality therefore undertakes to plan the management and expansion of the services carefully in order to ensure that both current and reasonably expected future demands are adequately catered for, and that demand levels which fluctuate significantly over shorter periods are also met. This may mean that the services operate at less than full capacity at various periods, and the costs of such surplus capacity must also be covered in the tariffs which are annually levied.

In adopting what is fundamentally a two-part tariff structure, namely a fixed availability charge coupled with a charge based on consumption, the municipality believes that it is properly attending to the demands which both future expansion and variable demand cycles and other fluctuations will make on service delivery.

It is therefore accepted that part of the municipality's tariff policy for electricity services will be to ensure that those consumers who are mainly responsible for peak demand, and therefore for the incurring by the municipality of the associated demand charges from Eskom, will have to bear the costs associated with these charges. To this end the municipality shall therefore install demand meters to measure the maximum demand of such consumers during certain periods. Such consumers shall therefore pay the relevant demand charge as well as a service charge directly related to their actual consumption of electricity during the relevant metering period.

PART 3: CALCULATION OF TARIFFS FOR MAJOR SERVICES

In order to determine the tariffs which must be charged for the supply of the four major services, the municipality shall identify all the costs of operation of the undertakings concerned, including specifically the following:

- * Cost of bulk purchases in the case of water and electricity.
- * Distribution costs.
- * Distribution losses in the case of electricity and water.
- * Depreciation expenses.
- * Maintenance of infrastructure and other fixed assets.

- * Administration and service costs, including:
 - service charges levied by other departments such as finance, human resources and legal services;
 - reasonable general overheads, such as the costs associated with the office of the municipal manager;
 - adequate contributions to the provisions for bad debts and obsolescence of stock;
 - all other ordinary operating expenses associated with the service concerned including, in the case of the electricity service, the cost of providing street lighting in the municipal area (note: the costs of the democratic process in the municipality – that is, all expenses associated with the political structures of the municipality – shall form part of the expenses to be financed from property rates and general revenues, and shall not be included in the costing of the major services of the municipality).

- * The intended surplus to be generated for the financial year, such surplus to be applied:
 - as an appropriation to capital reserves; and/or
 - generally in relief of rates and general services.

Because water is a scarce national resource, and this municipality is committed to the prudent conservation of such resources, the tariff levied for domestic consumption of water shall escalate according to the volume of water consumed. The tariff for domestic consumption shall be based on monthly consumption of up to 6 kl, more than 6 kl but not more than 50 kl, more than 50 kl but not more than 80 kl. Tariffs for non-domestic consumption shall be based on a single charge per kl consumed, irrespective of the volume of consumption concerned.

Tariffs for pre-paid meters shall be based on a single charge levied on all the categories of consumers concerned, but no availability charge shall be levied on

properties where pre-paid meters have been installed. This distinction is made in recognition of the financial advantages which pre-paid metering entails for the services in question.

PART 4: ELECTRICITY

- (a) Electricity tariffs be approved by Council three months prior to implementation, for the National Electricity Regulator to finally approve implementation thereof.
- (b) The various categories of electricity consumers, as set out in sub-section (d) below, shall be charged at the applicable tariffs, as approved by the Council in each annual budget.
- (c) Tariff adjustments be effective as from the date on which the water meters be read during a specific month as resolved by Council:
- (d) Categories of consumption and charges shall be as follows:
 - 1. With the exception of registered indigents, all electricity consumers shall be billed for their electricity consumption at the tariff applicable to the category in which the particular consumer falls.
 - 2. All domestic electricity consumers of the municipality who are registered as indigents with the municipality shall receive the first 50kWh (fifty) of electricity consumed per month free.
 - 3. All commercial, industrial and other non-domestic properties shall additionally be billed a monthly basic charge per meter installed and, where applicable, a demand charge appropriate to their respective levels of consumption.

PART 5: WATER

- (a) The categories of water consumers as set out in sub-section (c) below shall be charged at the applicable tariffs, as approved by the Council in each annual budget.
- (b) Tariff adjustments shall be effective as from the date on which the water meters be read during a specific month as resolved by Council:
- (c) Categories of consumption and charges shall be:
 - 1. All those registered with the municipality as indigents shall receive the first 6 (six) kl of water consumed per month free. Thereafter a stepped tariff per kl as determined by the Council from time to time shall be applicable on metered water consumption.
 - 2. All other domestic consumers shall be charged for actual water consumption at a stepped tariff per kl as determined by the Council from time to time.
 - 3. All other consumers, including businesses, industries and institutional consumers shall pay the same fixed tariff per kl, irrespective of the volume of water consumed.
 - 4. A basic charge per water meter, as determined by the Council from time to time, shall be charged on all businesses, industries and institutional consumers. .

PART 6: REFUSE REMOVAL

- (a) The categories of refuse removal users as set out in sub-section (c) below shall be charged at the applicable tariffs, as approved by the Council each annual budget.
- (b) Tariff adjustments shall be effective from 1 July each year.

- (c) A separate fixed monthly refuse removal charge shall apply to each of the following categories of users, based on the costs of the service concerned:
 - a) Domestic and other users
 - b) Business and other users
- (d) Registered indigents may receive such discount on this charge as the Council deems affordable when approving each annual budget, but on the understanding that such discount shall not be less than 50% of the monthly amount billed as a refuse removal charge.

PART 7: SEWERAGE

- (a) The categories of sewerage users as set out in sub-section (c) below shall be charged per month at the applicable tariff as approved by the Council in each annual budget.
- (b) Tariff adjustments will be effective from 1 July each year.
- (c) Categories of usage and charges shall be:
 1. A basic (availability) charge per month shall be charged for undeveloped erven, irrespective of their permitted or intended use.
 2. Registered indigents may receive such discount on this charge as the council deems affordable when approving each annual budget, but on the understanding that such discount shall not be less than 50% of the monthly amount billed for this service.
 3. A fixed monthly charge based on the costs of the service shall be charged for domestic users.
 4. A fixed monthly charge based on the costs of the service per sewer point/toilet shall be charged to all businesses, industries and institutional users.

5. An effluent fee shall further be payable by factories and other industrial users where the wastewater emanating from such users requires special purification measures by the municipality. Such fees shall be based on the toxic content of the wastewater concerned and the costs of the purification.

PART 8: SUNDRY TARIFFS

All sundry tariffs shall be approved by the council in each annual budget, and shall, when deemed appropriate by the council, be subsidised by property rates and general revenues, particularly when the tariffs will prove uneconomical when charged to cover the cost of the service concerned, or when the cost cannot accurately be determined, or when the tariff is designed purely to regulate rather than finance the use of the particular service or amenity.

All sundry tariffs over which the municipality has full control, and which are not directly related to the cost of a particular service, shall annually be adjusted at least in line with the prevailing consumer price index, unless there are compelling reasons why such adjustment should not be effected.

The following services shall be considered as subsidised services, and the tariffs levied shall cover 50% or as near as possible to 50% of the annual operating expenses budgeted for the service concerned:

- burials and cemeteries
- rentals for the use of municipal sports facilities

The following services shall be considered as community services, and no tariffs shall be levied for their use:

- municipal lending library (except for fines set out below)

The following services shall be considered as economic services, and the tariffs levied shall cover 100% or as near as possible to 100% of the budgeted annual operating expenses of the service concerned:

- housing rentals
- town planning and building plan approvals
- fire brigade services
- rental of vehicles and equipment
- rentals for the use of municipal halls and other premises (subject to the provisions as set out below)
- sales of refuse bins
- cleaning of stands
- electricity, water, sewerage: new connexion fees
- photo-copies and fees
- clearance certificates.

The following charges and tariffs shall be considered as regulatory or punitive, and shall be determined as appropriate in each annual budget:

- fines for lost or overdue library books
- advertising sign fees
- pound fees
- electricity, water: disconnection and reconnexion fees
- penalty and other charges imposed in terms of the approved policy on credit control and debt collection
- penalty charges for the submission of dishonoured, stale, post-dated or otherwise unacceptable cheques.

Market-related rentals shall be levied for the lease of municipal properties.

The municipal manager shall determine whether an indemnity or guarantee must in each instance be lodged for the rental of municipal halls, premises and sports fields, and in so determining shall be guided by the likelihood of the municipality's sustaining damages as a result of the use of the facilities concerned.