

Welcome Speech by Mayor Zandile Gumede for the Customer Service Masterclass held at Durban ICC

01 November 2018

Programme Directors, Ms Amanda Bani-Mapena and Eric Apelgren,
MEC for COGTA, Ms Nomusa Dube-Ncube ,
Director General, Dr Nonhlanhla Mkhize,
HOD for COGTA, Mr Tubane,
Acting Head for Sizakala, Mr Mavuso Shabalala,
Government officials,
Academics,
Panellists,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Sanibonani,

I would like to take this opportunity and welcome you to this inaugural eThekweni Customer Service Masterclass. This is platform where the eThekweni's Customer Service, our community and friends are going to engage on the matters of customer service.

As the smart and world class, award winning city we have moved from treating our communities as beggars of services but we treat them as clients. Our people and citizen are our main customers and we need to apply best principles in order to give them best service. It doesn't matter whether they are indigent or child headed households, we need to fix our turnaround times.

We must begin to make it a requirement that managers are scored based on their turnaround. It is wrong for government official to sit with a customer query for months. Fixing a leak cannot take 10 years and lighting a street pole must never take another decade. We cannot afford to have potholes not being, water leaks all over, grass not being cut especially in our former black townships and rural areas.

As the Mayor, in my office I have established call centre which looks into issues that comes from the community. We still have departments that takes forever to respond to simple issues. Some of the issues includes the none payments of small black business which kills our SMMEs.

Government must begin to operate like business with quick turnarounds, if we don't take care of our people unfortunately they turn against us. In business customers walk away but with government, customers will vote protest, they'll refuse to pay rates, they take us to courts or chapter nine institutions like Public Protector and the worse scenario they will vote us out of power.

Our old slogan was ... People First and ANC to the Front. As government we must say Citizens first and Customer service to the front.

The objective of the Masterclass in the main is to share experiences, discuss the current challenges faced by customer services with the aim of getting to potential solutions thereof.

What we want to achieve at the end of the class is a much more informed Customer Service Practice that is able to influence policy towards customer centricity. This will ultimately lead to an improvement in the satisfaction levels of our customers.

Customer Relations Management Strategy

eThekweni Municipality is currently in a process of reviewing its Customer Relations Management in order for the City to be more responsive to the needs of its customers. Our Customer Relations Management is underpinned by the eleven principles of Batho Pele (**putting people first**) in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Programme Director ,

It brings me great pleasure to announce that in the last Council meeting eThekweni Municipal Customer Service standards and the Customer Service Charter were approved. For the first time in the history of our organisation we have Municipality wide standards, the principle of **Service Standards** has truly been brought to life. We urge our Deputy City Managers and Heads of Unity to provide bold leadership and ensure that everyone adhere to these standards.

Since we came into office in 2016 we have launched an award winning WhatsApp for Water customers, One number, mayoral hotline and CEOs forum. These flow from the ANC manifesto which said we must respond to issues affecting rate payers. We must be a responsive government. We are improving relations with all of our customers.

We are sober to the fact that we might have teething problems but those should not create doubts in our cause to improve people's lives. We are on the right course, we remain inspired by late President Mandela when he said and I quote "***It always seems impossible until it's done.***"

Into the future our customers will be fully aware of what service to expect from us and when will that service be provided. Gone are the days where government avoided accountability.

In line with the principle of **Access** all customers should have equal access to the services to which they are entitled. We are improving access through the *one number*, which is a toll-free number that customers can call on any service related matter. Should these contact centers fail to address the queries and complaints, our Mayoral line has also been open to deal with escalated matters.

We have more than 45 customer service centers that we run. We have moved to malls and have mobile offices from time to time in order to deal with issues from our customers.

I am pleased to also announce that our very own App is currently in production and will go live before the end of the year. Our customers can engage us on this platform to request services as well as get valuable information about us.

Programme Director,

We have also invited the academia, as the Municipality we want to bridge the gap between practice and theory in customer services. We do not want to continue to issue the *Gatekeeper letters* and we never get the

research reports to solve our problems. To the academics in the house we want those reports. To be able to implement research driven solutions. Through the EThekweni Municipal Academy we will continue to engage the local Tertiary Institutions to this effect.

As the Municipality we fully participate in the Provincial Service Excellence Awards. Our Customer Services Team hosting this Masterclass are the current bronze holders of the best Batho Pele Team. Our own Rewards and Recognition Policy has been finalized in line with these awards.

Through **Leadership and Strategic Direction**, as leaders we must create an atmosphere which allows for creativity. We need to ensure that goals are set and that planning is done to give direction. As leaders we must inspire our teams to do more for less. We will never have enough resources but for us is to make do we what we have.

Conclusion

If we put all the Batho Pele Principles into practice, we then increase the chances of improvement in our customer service and ultimately how we deliver as government. This in turn will have a positive impact on our customer's satisfaction levels. It is about how the principles link together to show how we have improved our overall service delivery. Here we look at the benefits we have given to our customers both internally and externally.

This Masterclass can never be a talk shop Ladies and Gentlemen; I would like to see credible results driven plans to improve customer service. I

want to see these plans informing our Customer Relations Management Strategy and ultimately informing how we do business.

I hope that other organisations taking notes on the good that will come out and implement in their own spaces. We are also going to be learn from the work you do.

Let's us be the change that we want to see. Let us at all times be customer centric and solutions driven. Abantu phambili, people first, batho pele.

I thank you.