

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT BULLETIN

Volume 11 • Issue 3 • August 2009



## 1999-2008



# Vision 2011 and 2014

## OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS

At the *Local Government Bulletin's* tenth anniversary conference, Mr Elroy Africa, the acting director-general of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, outlined the vision of the ministry and the department in the short and long term, emphasising the need to improve the quality of governance and service delivery by local government.



Prof Steytler, Mr Africa, Prof de Visser

His address mapped out the progress made by local government in the past decade commencing with the unveiling of the White Paper on Local Government in 1998. He asked how far South Africa had come in realising the four goals set out in the White Paper:

- providing household infrastructure and services to all;
- creating liveable, integrated cities, towns and rural areas;
- promoting local economic development; and
- enhancing community empowerment and redistribution.

While considerable progress had been made, many municipalities required the support intervention offered by Project Consolidate since 2004. Yet this intervention had also revealed a number of weaknesses:

- the non-sustainability of many of the hands-on interventions in municipalities;
- poor accountability mechanisms in municipalities to ensure ownership by both councillors and officials; and
- weak political oversight and buy-in in respect of the programme across all levels of government.

Reflecting on the state of local government in 2009, Mr Africa noted that the debate on local economic development had still not decided between a pro-growth or a pro-poor approach. While significant progress had been made with the increased access of communities to piped water and flushed toilets, water and sanitation

infrastructure was under severe strain and dilapidated. There was no single reason for the current wave of service delivery protests, but there were a number of contributing factors. Overall there was a mixed picture of irreversible progress and significant areas of service delivery failure.

Looking to the future, Mr Africa saw it as the ministry's fundamental objective to instil the confidence of the public in South Africa's system of local government through targeted programmatic and policy reform intervention over the next

two to five years. The first step was to have intensive interactive engagement sessions with each municipality, resulting in a national State of Local Government Report that would be finalised by the end of September 2009. This would be followed by the development of a national Local Government Turnaround Strategy by December 2009.

The department, together with its partners, intends to work actively towards achieving the following by 2011, when the next local government elections are due:

- significantly reducing the number of complaints by the public and communities against municipalities;
- giving ward committees the necessary powers and resources to develop and implement a ward development plan;
- reducing reported cases of fraud and corruption in municipalities;
- ensuring a reformed regime of remuneration and provision for tools of trade for councillors, ward committee members and community development workers (CDWs);
- ensuring the increased and effective monitoring of service providers by public representatives, officials and communities; and
- reducing the number of service delivery protests.

'As we go forward we will call on all our development,



community, business, labour, civil society, research and academic partners, such as the Community Law Centre, to partner with us as we seek to realise a better life for all our people.'

The department, together with its partners, intends to actively work towards achieving the following by 2014:

- halving municipal debt, which has increased to more than R51 billion currently;
- greater progress in working towards a debt-free society, by promoting a culture of saving and paying for services;
- ensuring that all municipalities have clean audits;
- ensuring that we have clean cities, through the management of waste in such a way that it creates employment and wealth, which must include the establishment and maintenance of people's parks;
- trained and competent councillors, traditional leaders, officials, ward committee members, CDWs and community activists; and
- ensuring that the Thusong centres become the face of cooperative government in local communities.

The department will also manage a parallel initiative aimed at policy and legislative reform primarily directed at local government. The 16 areas identified are still being subjected to a political process that will inform the nature and pace of this reform initiative. Areas include the following:

- new legislation on subnational powers and functions to regulate or replace Schedules 4 and 5 of the Constitution;
- reform of the intergovernmental fiscal system to promote viable provincial and local government;
- strengthening legislative provisions to intervene directly in provincial and local government;
- reform of the two-tier system of local government;
- the review and separation of municipal legislative and executive functions;
- strengthened regulatory frameworks on performance management and compliance with the codes of conduct for administrative officials and elected representatives;
- reform of the regulatory and funding regime for ward committees; and
- a review of the Organised Local Government Act.