

From SALGA

Roles of political office-bearers

The national workshop on the roles and responsibilities of political office-bearers in Mogale City on 29 and 30 August was the culmination of a series of provincial workshops on the roles and responsibilities of mayors and speakers.

D.H. Makobe from SALGA and J. Mettler and J. de Visser, both from the Community Law Centre, facilitated the provincial workshops. A SALGA steering committee facilitated the national workshop, which was based on a compilation of provincial inputs.

THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP

The first objective of the meeting was for the workshop to serve as a national culmination of the preceding provincial workshops. This gave provincial delegates the opportunity to raise pertinent issues at national level. The second objective was to reach broad consensus on the principles that underlie the roles and responsibilities of mayors and speakers. Thirdly, agreement had to be reached on how the process would be concluded.

Pertinent issues

The issue of collective leadership was raised as an important component that would underlie the roles and responsibilities of mayors and speakers. The basis of collective leadership is not purely a political matter but also finds resonance in the objects of local government, which the entire municipality must strive to achieve.

The impartiality of the speaker's office was another pertinent issue raised by delegates. It was accepted that there has to be a measure of impartiality when the speaker acts in his or her capacity as speaker, that is when he or she applies the rules of order in chairing meetings or applies the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

There was also general agreement that the role of the deputy mayor is quite separate from, and should not conflict with, that of the speaker. The delegation of ceremonial functions must take into account the office of the deputy mayor, where it exists.

Consensus on principles

There was broad consensus that the following principles underlie the roles and responsibilities of political office-bearers.

In respect of the **Executive Mayor:**

- section 56 of the Structures Act, including further delegations;
- ceremonial functions;
- functions relating to financial management; and
- political head of the municipality.

In respect of the **Mayor:**

- chair of executive committee, including further delegations;
- ceremonial functions;
- functions relating to financial management; and
- political head of the municipality.

In respect of the **Speaker:**

- chair of council meetings;
- implementation of the Code of Conduct; and
- delegated functions including –
 - public participation in legislative matters;
 - establishment and functioning of ward committees; and
 - support to councillors.

Conclusion of process

The workshop resolved to mandate SALGA to compile standard terms of reference in terms of section 53 of the Systems Act. These must take into account the categories and types of municipalities as well as the above principles. They must be made available to municipalities by the end of October in order for municipalities to revisit their rules of order and their systems of delegations, if need be.

The idea was also raised to compile a handbook for mayors and speakers that would assist them in the performance of their functions.

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