

# **CHIREDDZI RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **CHAIRMAN'S END OF YEAR REPORT – DECEMBER 2014**

### **INTRODUCTION**

We meet once again on the occasion of the last Full Council for the year 2014, being the 4<sup>th</sup> Full Council for the present Council. Indeed ladies and gentlemen, we have already covered a full year in office, and this calls for a reflection on that journey we have travelled so far. I greet you all.

The year 2014 ladies and gentlemen, has been a fascinating, as well as a challenging one for our Council, as we went through a mixed bag of failures as well as success. The true measure of character and strengths of organisations is not about never falling, but being able to rise after falling. So as I take you through 2014, let us be mindful of the above.

Ladies and gentlemen, my Council has six departments namely, Administration and Human Resources, Finance, Technical Services, Community Services, Environment, Agriculture and Tourism, and Audit. The same departments are secretariats to Council's committees and sub-committees as per their terms of reference. I will in turn reflect on the activities of these departments, in the hope that I will have reflected on Council's progress for the year 2014.

### **ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

This is the department that is responsible for the day to day running of the Council, its relationship with other organisations and stakeholders. The department is responsible for Council's Human resources, and is secretariat to the Staffing Committee of Council. This is the department that is responsible for making sure that Council has the right workforce, that is well motivated, and geared to make all other resources work. Ladies and gentlemen, this department is unfortunately, the only department without a substantive HOD. We need to make sure that we correct this anomaly as soon as practical, so that we instil confidence in that regard.

The department managed to successfully carry out a job evaluation exercise to guide Council in terms of its recruitment and staff levels, in line with the worthy of each job. Chiredzi RDC now has a staff establishment of 72 workers. This means that we have effectively dealt away with fixed contract workers, and we can only hire casuals where there is need. The department still need to carry out a comprehensive Human Resource Policy to complement the job evaluation, and guide Council's remuneration, recruitment and benefits schemes. The department was recently entrusted with the administration of the transport portfolio, which mandate it is struggling to execute.

However, the department managed to procure 3 new pick-up vehicles, 3 new motor cycles, and received donations of 2 operational vehicles from development partners. In a way ladies, and gentlemen, I can safely say, that our Council has enough services vehicles, to effectively carry out our mandate in the district. With the recent approval of our application for borrowing powers, we intend to fully recapitalize our Council, and improve service delivery. We also managed to dispose obsolete vehicles and materials for reinvestment.

We have managed to attend all our scheduled Council meetings save for some that were postponed, but still attended, courtesy of the department. Our employees have been paid all their salaries for the year in each respective month, well on time. In this regard Council has also managed to pay all the statutory obligations in each months, save for few delays in some months, due to cash flow challenges. Our councillors have also received their monthly allowances on time, including their subsistence and transport allowances.

Our workers' moral has been kept moderate, with the workers' committee being an easy target for the Workers Union. The committee is more prone to the demands of the union, no matter how unreasonable, thereby likely to drag the Council into unnecessary labour unrest at any given moment. This remains our greatest challenge, to make the Workers' Committee responsive to Council's core business, despite the fact that Council listens to their concerns. The department needs to improve its image and appeal to the generality of the workers. Otherwise, all the gains of the year can be reversed.

### **FINANCE DEPARTMENT**

The department is responsible for the mobilisation, custody, and disbursement of Council's financial resources. The department is secretariat to the Council's Finance Committee, which is a mandatory committee of Council. The department is headed by an Executive Officer Finance, who is substantive.

Council cannot do or execute its mandate without requisite finances. The performance of the 2014 budget has not been all that satisfactory due to a number of factors. The general liquidity crunch affecting the economy, has not spared us, as well. The low disposable income for our committees meant that few could afford to pay their levies or rates. The failure by the GMB and other grain buyers, to purchase farmers' produce on time has dealt a heavy blow to our rural folk, whose source of income is the agriculture. Even our perennial leading rate payers, the Sugar Estates have had their challenges as well. They could not afford to pay the budgeted amounts for 2014, resulting in the mill levies being revised downwards.

This has had a net effect of reducing our budget and consequently our collection rate. The performance of the 2014 budget can be summarised as follows.

2014 Budget	- \$3 573 927-24
Income with Borrowing Powers	- \$2 113 142-00
Budget performance with Borrowing Powers	= 59.13%
Income without Borrowing Powers	= \$1 613 142-00
Domestic Income	= \$1 552 842-00
Domestic Performance	= 62%

If we are to include the performance after the revised budget for Tongaat Hulleets, our figures could be higher. However, the performance is still below the 69% performance for 2013 as at 30 November 2013. However, with the 2014 hunting season still on, for the key species, we still have hope for improvement, though the chances are very slim. There are also plan approvals to be paid by Tongaat Hulleets, and other amounts still pending for the same. These have hopes of raising our collection rate.

At one time, between July and September, our cash inflows were so subdued that we had to suspend major activities, including the holding of meetings. That is how bad, Council finances can be at times. I want us to congratulate ourselves, that even in the face of such adversity, your Council still managed to rise above board, and executed its mandate well. We managed to Audit our 2013 Final Accounts, well on time, and also financed the government-run Remuneration and Conditions of Service for Senior Officers audits. Your Council was above board in most of the areas, that had been identified for auditing. There is room for improvement in the areas noted otherwise.

### **TECHNICAL SERVICES**

The department is responsible for the works, roads and planning portfolios for Council. It offers secretariat services to the Technical Services committee, and is headed by a substantive HOD.

The department has been able to do road works like bush clearance, and motorised grading for over 600 km of road lengths. Most of this has been mainly due to local income, in terms of fuel procurement and manpower, to include plant and machinery. Only the Twiza-Crooks road was done with the assistance of the ZINARA funds to the tune of \$16 000-00. However, Council went further and graded the road up to Chief Sengwe's homestead. Council also motorised graded Mhlanguleni to Mpagati DDF road, using local revenue. The Council also did the Mathwa-Makambe road using local resources. The road belongs to DDF. Council also did the Makambe- Chikombedzi road which belongs to the state, using own resources.

The department has also received about \$33 000-00 to do the Samba-Jatala road, from ZINARA. The road will be done, before the year ends, once the grading team completes the Damarakanaka-BJB road, currently underway.

Ladies and gentlemen, we appreciate how big the district is, but we also have to appreciate limited resources in that regard as well. It is the department's wish that every road in the district, be rehabilitated. Our clarion call is for all the road authorities to do their part as well, so that we complement the efforts. We also appreciate the 600 litres of diesel that DDF managed to source throughout the year 2014.

Under Planning, the department managed to plan, site and peg new business centres, clinics and schools throughout the district, notably in the resettlement areas. Over 20 business centres we pegged in this regard.

The department also managed to produce new layout plans for Rupangwana Business Centre, and Zaka Turn-off. The former was approved and will see residential commercial and industrial stands, being availed. This is being complemented by a piped water scheme being developed for the Rural Service Centre, which I am advised has been completed.

The department also managed to initiate a major housing scheme for the remainder of Buffalo Range extension in partnership with Shangani Holdings. The layout plan has been done and approved, together with the valuation of the stands for the determination of the intrinsic land value. Title surveys have been initiated though not completed. The intrinsic land value for over 1000 stands (low density) stands at over US\$3 million. It is unfortunate, that our partners have now slowed down the pace at which they were following up the project, for the reasons not yet disclosed to Council.

Whatever, the case may be, the land remains under Chiredzi RDC, and we are free to partner any appropriate partner to deliver housing to our needy people.

We have also partnered Chiredzi Town Council to avail land to Co-operatives and land developers, for housing development in the other part of Buffalo Range earmarked for urban expansion. In all instances the land still belongs to Chiredzi RDC. There are disturbing scenes where our sister Council seems to be interested in our affairs as Chiredzi RDC, to the extent of wanting to plan our area, when we have never planned in their area of jurisdiction. This is unconstitutional, and we urge them to observe due processes in this regard.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES**

The Community Services department is responsible for the development of educational, health, water and sanitation, and recreational infrastructure. It is secretariat to Community Services Committee and is headed by a substantive HOD.

The department has undertaken a number of initiatives this year. These include establishment of new clinics in the district, like the Chikwirire and Turkey Heart, the completion of Gudo clinic super structure in partnership with development partners, and the construction of Gwaseche clinic part block, to roofing level.

The department has assisted several schools to establish, and also renovated obsolete or vandalised structures. The department also introduced performance rewards for outstanding Council schools from primary to High Schools, in public examinations. This has seen deserving schools getting shields trophies and cash from Council as tokens of appreciation. The prizes are meant to be annual phenomenon.

The department managed to construct flea markets in Triangle at Dulys, and Rupangwana, in Sangwe communal lands. At Dulys, a total of 110 units were constructed for 110 beneficiaries. This was after the initial stages of fencing the flea market area to acceptable standards. This has assisted Council to harness in more revenue from public transporters, and vendors, since their activities are now under Council's control.

At Rupangwana a total of 42 units have so far been constructed, for 42 beneficiaries. More are still to be constructed. At Chikombedzi, the site for the construction of flea markets has been identified and work will be starting soon. The materials have already been mobilised to this effect.

The department also runs the Council's income generating projects like, beer halls and the cement project. However, the future of the beer halls project is gloomy since the project is failing to break even due to a huge wage bill, and subdued demand, as a result of low disposable incomes to the people. Deliberations, as to the way forward of the Chikombedzi beer hall will be done in the relevant committees.

The water and sanitation project has received a major boost from our development partners like UNICEF, NRC, Plan and IRC among others. This has seen over 60 new boreholes being drilled and fitted especially in the new resettlement areas, hundreds of bore holes being rehabilitated, and new latrines being constructed in schools and public institutions. Several sanitation triggering sessions were done in the resettlement areas, sanitation groups being trained, and community based management of water points being promoted. More important is the Rupangwana piped water scheme, which should stimulate growth at the Rural Service Centre, in line with the extended layout plan.

Still disturbing ladies and gentlemen is the Chikombedzi Growth Point water situation. It is evident that ZINWA has failed to provide water at the growth point. As Council we cannot watch the situation getting worse by the day. In this regard the office has initiated the revival of the piped water scheme that used to serve the Chikombedzi Mission Hospital. Plans are at advanced stage to jointly rehabilitate the scheme, with Council leading the process. We are communicating with ZINWA, so as to do away with possible policy implications in terms of provision of water at the growth point. This should be a priority project for 2015, otherwise all hopes of Chikombedzi growth point growing will be dashed. It is a potential health hazard if the situation continues unresolved.

The Community Services department has never been any busier, hence, additional personnel in the form of the EHT, to complement efforts.

### **ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM**

The department is responsible for safeguarding our environment and natural resources, agricultural development, and tourism promotion in the district. It is secretariat to the Environment Committee and to the CAMPFIRE sub-committee. The department has a substantive HOD.

Under CAMPFIRE the department has realised suppressed revenue inflows, partially due to the ban on ivory trade from Zimbabwe, by the US Government in 2014, and also due to non-availability of key species like the elephant. The elephant is there on quota but it simply vanished from the concession areas. They were difficult to locate buy the clients, and as a result, there was very little off-take. What this means is that there is reduced income for the communities and Council. This has implications on the management of elephant as a ecological and economic species, if the future of CAMPFIRE is to be safeguarded. There is need for diversification of CAMPFIRE to include non-consumptive tourism, and also the inclusion of forest and other natural resources.

The department also took on board the EU-Wild programme, meant to diversify the CAMPFIRE project in Naivasha, as a pilot project. The project has to firmly begin, as it needs to be run concurrently with the hunting programme which has always been there. The project is being spearheaded by Sustainable Agricultural Technologies (SAT).

The department is also concluding the ward 32 FACODA programme, under which they have to lease the Mhangula Triangle to Malilangwe Trust in return for financial assistance, for projects development in the communities. The programme has been on the cards for long, and it is my hope that it will be completed sooner.

The department need to be active in Agricultural development, particularly irrigation development in light of the Tokwe Mukosi Dam completion. The department needs to be proactive in promoting conservation, and tourism investment. There is need for Council visibility in the areas of agriculture, and environmental protection, so that we complement government efforts in this regard. The recent move to twin our Council with Makhadho Municipality of South Africa, is a big boost for our tourism. We need to conclude the deal soon.

## **AUDIT**

The Audit department is the secretariat to the Audit Committee of Council. It is responsible for safeguarding Council's assets, systems maintenance and compliance. The department is a one-man band, with assistance from students on attachment. I think we need to employ full time personnel to give the vibrancy necessary for the department to execute its mandate.

A number of internal audits of Council's operations and departments have been carried out by the department. Other audits have been carried out in response to calls by SDCs, in schools, or other Community initiatives. Council recommendations and implementation of resolutions have been put under scrutiny as well.

It is my conviction that a fully pledged audit department is necessary to provide checks and balances to Council operations in line with enabling legislation. However, the audit department need to build up its image, and acceptability by other departments. More often than not, we have squabbles emanating from the way the audit department operates. Similarly Council operatives need to rise above, and abide by the laws governing them.

Lastly, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders, NGOs, government departments, private sector, and the Ministry of Local Government for being at Council's disposal whenever we needed your assistance. Development needs an integrated approach for it to be realised. The rolling out of the RBM programme alongside the ZIM-ASSET blue-print means that it is no longer business as usual in the way Councils conduct their businesses. As such Councils should live up to the expectations.

May Council will endeavour to complement government efforts, through the provisions of affordable, relevant and quality services to the people. I am convinced I have the right team in terms of councillors and the executive. To this end I would like to congratulate my executive for taking time to improve themselves academically and professionally. One hopes that the Masters Degrees obtained will be translated into Master Class service delivery.

I thank you.