

**Enhancing participatory democracy through the ward committee  
system in Matlosana local municipality**

**O R THABANCHU**

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**Supervisor: Mr P W Heydenrych**

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## ABSTRACT

The Constitution of South Africa, 1996, requires local government to be democratic and accountable to local communities. Municipalities are also constitutionally bound to encourage the involvement of the communities in the affairs of local government. Section 152 of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996, sets out the rights of communities to be involved in the affairs of local government. Participation is not only about communicating information and addressing the needs of the community. Participation is also about building partnerships with the community, being accountable to the community, allowing the community to take part in policy decisions, capacitating the community to understand their rights and obligations as citizens, and allowing the community to participate actively in social, political and economic affairs.

Local government as a sphere of government closest to the people plays a critical role in advancing the participation of the community. Chapter 4 of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 requires that municipalities should establish ward committees in order to enhance participatory democracy. Ward committees were therefore established, as community structures, to play a role in advocating needs, aspirations, potentials and problems of the community. However, studies appear to be critical on the functionality of ward committees and argue that most ward committees are not functioning as intended.

The purpose of the study is to establish whether Matlosana Local Municipality has created the environment for active participation through the ward committee system in order to enhance participatory democracy. The study further investigates whether the ward committees are functioning as intended and according to what the law requires. The researcher used a qualitative method to determine how Matlosana Local Municipality uses the ward committee system to enhance participatory democracy. The investigation revealed a number of challenges facing the ward committees which hinder their effectiveness. However, recommendations are recommended to assist the management of the municipality in making the system more effective.

**Key terms:** local government, participatory democracy, ward committees, community, municipality, municipal councillors, integrated development plan (IDP), municipal budget, municipal services, municipal officials

## UITTREKSEL

Die Grondwet van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika, 1996, vereis van plaaslike regering om demokraties en verantwoordbaar aan plaaslike gemeenskappe te wees. Munisipaliteite is ook grondwetlik verplig om die deelname van gemeenskappe in die aangeleenthede van plaaslike regering aan te moedig. Artikel 152 van die Grondwet artikuleer die regte van gemeenskappe om betrokke te wees in die aangeleenthede van plaaslike regering. Deelname is nie alleen gerig op die kommunikasie van inligting en die aanspreek van die behoeftes van die gemeenskap nie. Deelname het ook betrekking op die bou van vennootskappe met die gemeenskap, om verantwoordbaar te wees teenoor die gemeenskap, om die gemeenskap te laat deelneem aan beleidsbesluite, om die gemeenskap in staat te stel om hulle regte en verpligtinge as burgers te verstaan en om die gemeenskap in staat te stel om aktief aan sosiale, politieke en ekonomiese aangeleenthede deel te neem.

Plaaslike regering, as 'n sfeer van regering wat die naaste aan die gemeenskap funksioneer, speel 'n kritieke rol in die bevordering van deelname van die gemeenskap. Hoofstuk 4 van die Wet op Munisipale Strukture, 1998 vereis dat munisipaliteite wykskomitees moet instel ten einde deelnemende demokrasie te bevorder. Wykskomitees is derhalwe ingestel as gemeenskapstrukture om 'n rol te speel in die artikulasie van die behoeftes, aspirasies, potensiaal en probleme van die gemeenskap. Dit blyk egter dat studies krities is ten opsigte van die funksionaliteit van wykskomitees en dat geargumenteer word dat meeste wykskomitees nie funksioneer soos wat die bedoeling was nie.

Die doel van die studie is om te bepaal of Matlosana Plaaslike Munisipaliteit die omgewing daar gestel het vir aktiewe deelname deur die wykskomiteestelsel ten einde deelnemende demokrasie te bevorder. Die studie ondersoek voorts of die wykskomitees funksioneer soos die bedoeling was en in ooreenstemming met wat deur wetgewing bepaal is. Die navorser het 'n kwalitatiewe metode gebruik om te bepaal hoe Matlosana Plaaslike Munisipaliteit die wykskomiteestelsel gebruik om deelnemende demokrasie te bevorder. Die studie dui 'n aantal uitdagings aan wat deur wykskomitees in die gesig gestaar word en wat hulle effektiwiteit beperk. Aanbevelings, gerig tot die bestuur van die munisipaliteit, word egter gemaak ten einde hulle by te staan om die stelsel meer effektief te maak.

**Sleutel terme:** plaaslike regering, deelnemende demokrasie, wykskomitees, gemeenskap, munisipaliteit, munisipale raadslede, geïntegreerde ontwikkelingsplan (GOP), munisipale begroting, munisipale dienste, munisipale beamptes

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# CHAPTER1:INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 ORIENTATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Constitution of South Africa, 1996 and Chapter 4 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 prescribes the legal framework for participatory local democracy, and in particular, of ward committees. Local government is the sphere of government closest to the people and therefore it needs to find ways that ensure that citizens give input to the decisions that a local council takes. The community needs to participate fully in decisions that affect them in the local sphere of government. One way of achieving a successful and lasting model - to ensure that citizens' participation takes place - is by establishing a structured framework for participatory local governance. For this reason, ward committees were included in the legislation - as a way of providing an opportunity for communities to be heard in the local sphere of government in a structured and institutionalised way.

“Municipalities are legally bound to involve communities and civic organisations in the formulation of municipal budgets, planning and developmental priorities. This is largely done by means of establishing integrated development plans (IDP)” (Nzimakwe and Reddy, 2008:669). Therefore, in order for the municipality to comply with what the law requires, it has to create conditions for the local communities to participate in the affairs of the municipality. These conditions include, inter alia:

- Preparation, implementation and review of its IDP;
- The establishment, implementation and review of its performance management system;
- The monitoring and review of its performance, including the outcomes and impact of such performances;
- The preparation of its budgets; and
- Strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipal services (Craythorne, 2006:313-314).

It can be argued that participation goes beyond the provision of labour and inputs for developmental projects; it should be viewed as a means of empowering people - by developing their skills and abilities - thereby enabling them to negotiate with the development delivery system, or equipping them to make their own decisions, in terms of their own development needs and realities.

Participation plays an integral role in local democracy and local governance. De Beer and Swanepoel (1998:84), stated that local people are - or should be - the main actors in the development of their communities. They are going to be directly affected by the process and therefore they should be in the forefront in shaping and determining the direction of their own development agenda.

Ward committees were established in various municipalities, as community structures, to play a critical role in advocating needs, aspirations, potentials and problems of the communities - and also to give necessary information on municipalities to the community.

Consequently, this study intends to investigate whether ward committees are functioning as intended, and also whether they enhance the establishment of participatory local democracy. The study will specifically focus on ward committees in the Matlosana Local Municipality.

As discussed earlier, it appears that even if the ward committees exist and the ward committee system is well designed, it will not necessarily mean that they are effective. In Matlosana Local Municipality's municipal area, for example, there are situations where, in a ward led by an African National Congress (ANC) councillor, all members of the ward committee are ANC members. This creates a problem, as the ward committees are subjective as regards issues that affect their fellow comrades.

Ward committees need to be objective when discussing issues of service delivery, as they are not representing a political party, but they supposedly represent the community, irrespective of their political affiliation.

Matlosana Local Municipality established 31 ward committees in 2006. These comprise ten elected members, in accordance with the Municipal Structures Act of 1998. However, the Municipality is still confronted by the following challenges:

#### **1.1.1 The relationship between councillors and ward committees**

The ward councillor is the chairperson of the ward committee and he/she presides over meetings of the ward committee. Councillors are also responsible for giving information that ward committees require from council; and they must also obtain information from ward committees and take it back to the council. Some councillors are not adhering to their responsibilities; and that impact negatively on the functioning of their ward committees.

According to Piper and Deacon (2008:42), without a councillor who is competent, well organized and committed to the ward committee, the structure cannot operate. Therefore, the relationship between councillors and ward committees is important - in order to ensure the success of the ward committee system.

#### **1.1.2 Recognition of the ward committees by council**

In Matlosana Local Municipality, reports of the ward committees are submitted to the Office of the Speaker; and they are then further referred to portfolio committees and then finally become an item on the agenda of council for discussion. One problem is that the ward councillor can fail to submit the report, or the Office of the Speaker might fail to process the report.

It also appears that ward committees fail to give any feedback, as some of the officials are not seriously considering the issues that have been raised by the ward committees.

#### **1.1.3 Communication channels**

The primary function of ward committees should be to act as communication channels between communities and the municipal councils. The main task of the ward committee, therefore, is to communicate and consult with the community in respect of the integrated development plan and the issue of service delivery.

The ward committee should keep the community informed of decisions, and report progress and achievements made by council. In Matlosana Local Municipality, however, there is lack of any proper communication strategy to the ward committees for the dissemination of relevant information pertaining to municipal processes, decisions taken, as well as the implementation of projects. The reports of ward committees in the Office of the Speaker do not reflect how ward committees track progress on projects. Looking at the way the agenda of council meetings is structured, there is no reflection on how the issues raised by the ward committees are communicated to the council for discussion including how they are resolved.

#### **1.1.4 Political influence**

Party political influences impact on the nomination process of the ward committees. A situation prevails in Matlosana Local Municipality where all the members of the ward committee in a ward belong to one political party only. The problem is that some of the ward committee members refuse to accept the authority of a ward councillor, and can go to the extent of holding meetings without this ward councillor and can fail to attend the meetings of a councillor.

In view of the challenges identified above, this study will address the following question:

Whether the ward committee system is effective in enhancing participatory democracy in Matlosana Local Municipality, considering the challenges experienced.

## **1.2 OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study are to:

- (i) Analyse what community participation entails.
- (ii) Analyse how ward committees function to enhance community participation.
- (iii) Analyse the impact of ward committees and their strengths and weaknesses in promoting participatory democracy.

(iv) Determine ways in which the Matlosana Local Municipality can effectively use the ward committee system to enhance community participation.

### **1.3 LEADING THEORETICAL ARGUMENT**

Nyalunga (2006:45) stated that it can be argued that whilst ward committees are a key component of community-based involvement, many municipalities still do not have formal or functional ward committees in place. According to Reddy and Sikhakane (2008:692), studies have also shown that some ward committees are not functioning well, as the councillors fail to call regular meetings.

Political parties should not influence how ward committees are elected, or appointed, as is set out in the policy provisions. However, according to Piper and Deacon (2008:44), there have been situations where party political influence has played a role in the ward committee-nomination processes.

### **1.4 LITERATURE AND METHOD**

#### **DATABASES**

The following databases have been consulted for the purpose of the research:

- (i) Catalogue of thesis and dissertations.
- (ii) Catalogue of Ferdinand Postma Library, Potchefstroom Campus, NWU.
- (iii) Government policies and documents.

A literature study was conducted, in which both primary and secondary literature sources was used, to determine ways in which the municipality can effectively use the ward committee system to enhance community participation. Books, periodicals, government reports and other documents were consulted. Computer searches for relevant materials have been conducted in the library of the Potchefstroom Campus. A preliminary analysis indicated that ample material and literature are available to research the topic.

## **METHOD**

Two questionnaires were developed. One questionnaire targeted ward committee members, to determine committees' effectiveness. A second questionnaire enquired into the relevant information needed from ward councillors, as chairpersons of ward committees. Community members and other stakeholders were interviewed, since they are represented by the ward committees. Therefore, the respondents were the ward committees, ward councillors, officials of the municipality who are responsible for dealing with the operation of ward committees in the Office of the Speaker and community members.

Communities will be able to participate more in council decision-making if the ward committees run more effectively. Therefore, with the information received from all mentioned respondents, an analysis and evaluation was made, based on the objectives of the study.

## **1.5 CHAPTERS**

### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

An exposition of the substantiation, the research problem and the relevant research questions are made in chapter 1.

### **CHAPTER 2: LEGISLATIVE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

In this chapter, the legislative framework on public participation and ward committees will be analysed, considering its establishment and its functioning. This will be done in the context of a theoretical discussion on public participation and participatory democracy.

### **CHAPTER 3: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WARD COMMITTEES**

An analysis will be conducted in chapter 3 regarding the roles and responsibilities of ward committees in relation to the legislation - with special reference to the Matlosana Local Municipality.

#### **CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WARD COMMITTEES: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

In this chapter, the findings on the effectiveness of ward committees will be presented - with specific reference to the Matlosana Local Municipality.

#### **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter provides a summary and recommendations with regard to the research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LEGISLATIVE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND WARD COMMITTEES**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Local government as a sphere of government is closest to the people and therefore it must be responsive, responsible and accountable to citizens as governors (in democratic sense), taxpayers, and consumers of public service. According to Atkinson (2002:3) the importance of local government is based on several key factors. Firstly, local government is intrinsically multi sectoral. It is the only sphere of government that has the mandate to bring together the variety of sectoral issues within developmental policies, programmes and projects. Secondly local government, as mentioned, is closest to the people. This oft-used phrase has several aspects. Municipal offices are often simply geographically closer to residents than other spheres of government such as the provincial and national sphere and, especially for poor people such offices are often easier to reach. People participate most in their locality and around local issues and therefore, local government is an ideal space for the extension of public participation.

Local government also play a critical role in improving the lives of the communities and therefore there must be a system in place that clarifies roles and responsibilities of all structures that deals with public participation. According to Shah and Shah (2006:46), "... good local governance is not just providing a range of local services but also about preserving the life and liberty of residents, creating space for democratic participation and civic dialogue, supporting market-led and environmentally sustainable local development, and facilitating outcomes that enrich the quality of life of residents." Community participation is therefore the most important part of effective and accountable governance at local level. It is also clear that public participation is not a top-down phenomenon, as one cannot determine the participation programme at national level, plan it all the way to the bottom, and then tell the community what to do. Public participation is a community-driven process.

## 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It is imperative to consider the relationship between democracy and public participation in advancing the discussion of public participation in a theoretical context. The public must be actively involved in decision-making, establishment of policies and service delivery within government in order for the democratic government to exist. Therefore the role of people is critical in democracy. Democracy by its definition however, places people at the centre. Magstadt (2006:113) describes Hudson’s models of democracy as follows:

**TABLE 1: Hudson’s model of democracy**

<p>Protective Democracy major premise: the government that govern least governs best. This is minimalist, embraces a constitutional democracy that exists mainly to protect liberty and property rights while few demands on citizens to participate beyond voting.</p>	<p>Pluralist Democracy Major Premise: the possibility of civic virtue is limited by self interest, individuals naturally coalesce into groups when they are free to do so, and the” iron law of oligarchy” dictates that the success of any interest group depends on how expeditiously it recruits, promotes, and rewards leadership. This model departs from Madison’s pluralist theory in its emphasis on a democracy dominated by business and professional ethics.</p>
<p>Developmental Democracy Major premise: indirect popular participation in government is an essential training ground for citizenship. This model stresses the possibility of inculcating civic virtue through the process of representative democracy including political campaigns, caucuses, election opinion polling, town meeting and the like.</p>	<p>Participatory Democracy Major Premise: democracy requires that citizens be given as many opportunities as possible directly in decision making in all the areas of life that affects them- school, churches, neighbourhoods, communities, workplace, as well as elections and referenda. This model posits that apathy is not normal or natural but rather reflects a lack of meaningful opportunities for ordinary people to participate in life.</p>

Source: Adapted from Magstadt (2006:113)

Considering the above mentioned table, the present dispensation of South African local government shows clear elements of participatory democracy. Since 1994 local government has shown the commitment in implementing the principles of participation such as making government more responsive to the people’s needs and aspiration.

### **2.2.1 Core values of participation**

Participation is not only about communicating information and addressing the needs of the community. Participation is also about building partnerships with the community, being accountable to the community, allowing the community to take part in policy decisions that directly affect their lives, capacitating the community to understand their rights and obligations as citizens and allowing the community to participate actively in social, political and economical affairs in their environment.

The International Association for Public Participation indicates seven core values of participation that needs to be considered in order to make the public more effective partners. The seven values mentioned are indicated below:

The public should have a say in decisions about actions that could affect their lives.

Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decisions.

Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interest of all the participants, including decision makers.

Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.

Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

### **2.2.2 Typology of participation**

There are different types of participation that can be used to deepen the democratic process. Arnstein (1969:216-224) argued that there is a typology of eight levels of participation and it is arranged in the form of a ladder. They are as follows, beginning from the lowest level on the ladder: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation,

placation, partnership, delegated powers, and citizen control. Arnstein further emphasised that it is important to combine modes of participation as they are inter-linked. In consultative participation, for example, he elaborated that inviting citizen's opinions, like informing them, can be a legitimate step towards their full participation. The typology by the International Association for Public Participation is reflected below:

**TABLE 2: Typology of participation**

<b>INFORM</b>	<b>CONSULT</b>	<b>INVOLVE</b>	<b>COLLABORATE</b>	<b>EMPOWER</b>
<p><b>Public Participation Goal:</b></p> <p>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions</p> <p><b>Promise to the public:</b></p> <p>We will keep you informed</p> <p><b>Example Techniques to consider:</b></p> <p>Fact sheet Web sites Open houses</p>	<p><b>Public Participation Goal:</b></p> <p>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives</p> <p><b>Promise to the public:</b></p> <p>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</p> <p><b>Example Techniques to consider:</b></p> <p>Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings</p>	<p><b>Public Participation Goal:</b></p> <p>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.</p> <p><b>Promise to the public:</b></p> <p>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</p> <p><b>Example techniques to consider:</b></p> <p>Workshops Deliberate polling</p>	<p><b>Public Participation Goal:</b></p> <p>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of the alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</p> <p><b>Promise to the public:</b></p> <p>We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible</p> <p><b>Example techniques to consider:</b></p> <p>Citizens Advisory Committees Consensus-building Participatory decision making</p>	<p><b>Public Participation Goal:</b></p> <p>To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.</p> <p><b>Promise to the public:</b></p> <p>We will implement what you decide.</p> <p><b>Example techniques to Consider:</b></p> <p>Citizen juries Ballots Delegated decisions</p>

Source: Extracted from International Association for Public Participation(2004)

The Constitutional Court also gave its interpretation on participatory democracy in South Africa. In *Doctors for Life International* (CCT 12/05) Ngcobo J explained the participatory democracy as follows:

“115 In the overall scheme of our Constitution, the representative and participatory elements of our democracy should not be seen as being in tension with each other. They must be seen as mutually supportive. General elections, the foundation of representative democracy, would be meaningless without massive participation by the voters. The participation by the public on a continuous basis provides vitality to the functioning of representative democracy. It encourages citizens of the country to be actively involved in public affairs, identify themselves with the institutions of government and become familiar with the laws as they are made. It enhances the civic dignity of those who participate by enabling their voices to be heard and taken account of. It promotes a spirit of democratic and pluralistic accommodation calculated to produce laws that are likely to be widely accepted and effective in practice. It strengthens the legitimacy of legislation in the eyes of the people. Finally, because of its open and public character it acts as a counterweight to secret lobbying and influence peddling. Participatory democracy is of special importance to those who are relatively disempowered in a country like ours where great disparities of wealth and influence exist.

116 Therefore our democracy includes as one of its basic and fundamental principles, the principle of participatory democracy. The democratic government that is contemplated is partly representative and partly participatory, is accountable, responsive and transparent and makes provision for public participation in the law-making processes. Parliament must therefore function in accordance with the principles of our participatory democracy”.

In his explanation on participatory democracy, Justice Ngcobo put more emphasis on the principles of participatory democracy which is to allow active participation of citizens so that their voices can be heard. He further gave the difference between participation and representation. Citizens are therefore encouraged to familiarise themselves with the laws of this country in order for them to participate fully in public affairs.

### **2.2.3 Legislative framework on public participation**

In enhancing participatory democracy, communities must be involved in governance matters, including planning (Integrated Development Planning), budgeting, service delivery, performance monitoring and review. Therefore, all these aspects will be discussed in terms of the following pieces of legislation and policies.

The Constitution of South Africa, 1996 (Chapter 7 Section 152)

Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998

Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000

Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003

White Paper on Local Government, 1998

The Department of Provincial and Local Government: Ward Committee Resource Book, Best practices & lessons learnt for municipal officials, councillors & local governance practitioners, 2000.

#### **2.2.4 Institutionalising public participation**

The Constitution of South Africa, 1996, requires local government to be democratic and accountable to local communities, and it also encourages the involvement of communities in the matters of local government. It is therefore imperative for municipalities to establish structures and an institutionalised framework in order to adhere to that requirement.

Chapter 4 (Part 4) of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 requires that municipalities should establish ward committees in order to enhance participatory democracy. In order to institutionalise public participation, the Act further provides a framework for the operations of ward committees which includes also their powers and functions, term of office, procedure for dealing with their vacancies and the dissolution of ward committees.

Chapter 4 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 requires municipalities to develop mechanisms, processes and procedures to enable the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality.

Considering the scope of work as required by legislation on public participation, there must be a specific unit in municipalities that deals with public participation. Municipalities must develop policy on institutionalising public participation which includes the location of a public participation unit, public participation plan and implementation of ward committee system. In most municipalities, a public participation unit is not yet in place. The legislation is silent in mandating municipalities to institutionalise public participation in the sense that in most municipalities there is no unit or department that deals specifically with public participation except the Office of the Speaker.

### **2.2.5 Participation in the affairs of the municipality**

Municipalities are constitutionally obliged to encourage the involvement of the communities in the affairs of local government. Section 152 of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 set out clearly the rights of communities to be involved in the affairs of local governance. The White Paper on Local Government of 1998 (Section B 3.3) outlined that active participation by communities has to be encouraged at four levels namely:

- (i) As voter: to ensure maximum democratic accountability of the elected political leadership for the policies they are empowered to promote.
- (ii) As citizens: who express, via stakeholder associations, their views before, during and after the policy development process in order to ensure that policies reflect community preferences as far as possible.
- (iii) As consumers and end-users, who expect value for money, affordable services, and courteous and responsive service, and
- (iv) As organised partners involved in the mobilisation of resources for development via businesses, non-governmental organisations and community-based institutions.

According to Ababio, (2004:286) community participation in municipal government and administration requires that the community should be well informed about participation and government issues, problems and strategies hence the need for transparent government.

### **2.2.6. Integrated development plan (IDP)**

Each municipality must approve a single, inclusive and strategic plan for the development of the municipality. This plan is known as IDP”.

This plan is based on community needs and priorities as the community participates in identifying their most important needs. The IDP therefore becomes the vision of the municipality for long term development. Community participation is the most crucial aspect during the development of this plan as the plan must be based on their identified needs and priorities.

Chapter 7 of the Constitution of South Africa of 1996 stipulates the objective of municipalities as being to promote social and economic development. Section 153 of the Constitution further requires municipalities to structure and manage its administration and budgeting and administration processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community. Therefore, each municipality must have its local development strategy based on the environment, challenges and opportunities the municipality is faced with. It is the responsibility of communities to register their needs as according to IDP processes to direct the municipality in developing such strategy.

Chapter 5 of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 also requires the local community to participate in the drafting of the integrated development plan and also be consulted on its development needs and priorities. The White Paper on Local Government, 1998 further states that one of the strengths of integrated development planning is that it recognises the linkages between development, delivery and democracy. Building local democracy is a central role of local government and municipalities should develop strategies and mechanisms (including but not limited to, participative planning) to continuously engage with citizens, business and community groups.

### **2.2.7 Municipal budget**

“The municipal budgeting and financial affairs should be open for public scrutiny and communities should have a greater voice in ratifying decisions about how revenue is raised and spent. Community participation in budgeting should aim to incorporate those groups in the community, such as women, who face particular constraint in participating” (Ababio, 2004:287).

The Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 puts the local community at the centre of budget processes. It allows communities to make their inputs after the budget have been tabled in council. The budget must be linked to the integrated development plan adopted by the municipalities which includes the needs of the community.

According to Fatima and Paulus (2000:67) communities often engage with local government without understanding its role, its limitations and how budgets, which reflect priorities, work. It is therefore imperative that communities understand how budgets are drafted and what their legal rights are in terms of their inputs or exclusions.

### **2.2.8 Service delivery**

According to Ababio (2004:284) all municipalities should provide full and accurate information about the services they provide and who are entitled to them. Consultation is one of the important tools that can be used by a municipality to make the community aware about the standards of services that are within the financial capabilities of the municipality. It is imperative that service standards should be realistic, relevant and meaningful to the community. The provision of service by the municipality must be done according to section 9 of the Constitution of South Africa 1996. All citizens must be provided with services irrespective of their political affiliation, colour, religion, creed or sex.

It is suggested that the primary reasons for the protests in municipalities is the dissatisfaction with the delivery of the basic municipal services such as running water, electricity, toilets, especially in informal settlements. High unemployment (officially around 23%), high levels of poverty, poor infrastructure, and lack of houses add to the growing dissatisfaction in these poor communities.

“The Batho Pele White Paper aims to provide citizen-oriented customer service. This means that all public servants, including municipal staff, are required to ensure that the service they offer to the public is efficient and polite. Batho Pele calls for a shift away from inward-looking, bureaucratic systems, processes and attitudes to an attitude that says ‘the needs of the public come first’. This may mean that new ways of working with public are required, such as offering public service that is better, faster and more responsive to the citizens’ needs” (DPLG, 2005:19).

The Batho Pele White Paper is based on eight key principles and that is:

-Consultation: Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of service they receive, and, where possible, should be given a choice about the services which are provided.

- Service standards: Citizens should know what standard of service is expected.
- Access: All citizens should have equal access to the service to which they are entitled.
- Information: Citizens should be given full and accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive.
- Openness and transparency: Citizens should know how the departments are run, how resources are spent, and who is in charge of those particular services.
- Redress: If the promised standards of service are not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy, and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.
- Value- for-money: Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value-for-money.

Recognising that people have the right to basic services such as water and other amenities, there is also needs to be a development of consciousness within communities about their responsibility as citizens. Essentially, the role of members of the community as responsible citizens, implies the need of people to organise themselves to participate effectively in the processes that impact on their lives (Fatima and Elroy, 2000:66).

It is therefore imperative for the municipality to break down information on services into municipal wards so that the community should be able to know which projects in their wards are budgeted for.

### **2.2.9 Municipal performance management system**

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Regulations,2001, requires municipalities to establish a forum that will enhance community participation in the monitoring, measurement and review of the municipality's performance in relation to the key performance indicators and performance targets set by the municipality. The municipality according to these regulations is expected to hold regular meetings with the established forum and part of its duties is to monitor the municipality's performance in relation to the key performance indicators and performance targets set by the municipality.

Chapter 6 of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 stipulates clearly that a municipality through appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures established in terms of chapter 4, must involve the local community in the development, implementation and review of the municipality's performance management system, and, in particular, allow the community to participate in the setting of appropriate key performance indicators and performance targets for the municipality.

The Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) is a tool that municipalities use to implement and manage service delivery. A Guide to Municipal Finance Management for Councillors (2006: 77) illustrates that the SDBIP can be viewed as a 'contract' between the council and community, as well as between the municipality's administration and council. It promises the community on what the municipality will deliver in the coming year, and lays the basis for measuring performance and progress against end-of-year targets in service delivery and budget implementation.

In terms of regulation 19 of the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations (2009:430), the municipal manager must in accordance with section 21 of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 make public the approved service delivery and budget implementation plan within ten working days after the mayor has approved the plan.

The Act further states that the Municipal council or a committee of council must not exclude the public (including the media) when considering draft by laws, a budget, IDP, draft performance management system, decisions on service delivery agreement and other matters prescribed by regulation.

#### **2.2.10 Handling public complaints**

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 stipulates that a municipality must establish appropriate mechanisms, processes, and procedures to enable the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, and must for this purpose provide for the following:

- (i) The receipt, processing and consideration of petitions and complaints lodged by members of the local community.
- (ii) Notification and public comments procedures, when appropriate,

- (iii) Public meetings and hearings by the municipal council and other political structures and political office bearers of the municipality, when appropriate,
- (iv) Consultative sessions with locally recognised community organisations and, where appropriate, traditional authorities, and
- (v) Report back to the local community.

## **2.3 WARD COMMITTEE SYSTEM**

A Ward Committee is a legislated structure that municipalities must use as a vehicle to enhance community participation. The Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:11) defines a ward committee as a structure that makes it possible to narrow the gap between local municipalities and communities, since ward committees have the knowledge and the understanding of the citizens and communities they represent. The Resource Book further stipulates that ward committees were included in the legislation as a way of providing an opportunity for communities to be heard at the local government level in a structured and institutionalised way.

The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 makes provision for the ward committees in terms of their establishment, functionality, funding, term of office and the dissolution of ward committee. However, according to Nyalunga (2000:45) ward committees are largely perceived as ineffective in advancing citizen participation at the local government level.

The Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:18) stipulates that ward committees are an important way of reaching the broader community to assist them in accessing and understanding information of the municipality. That information includes:

- budget and related documents;
- the annual report;
- Performance agreements;
- service delivery agreements;
- partnership agreements; and

- any other documents providing insight into the state of the municipality’s financial affairs.

### 2.3.1 Establishment of ward committees

The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 Of 1998, requires that municipalities should establish ward committees in each ward and also develop rules regulating the procedure to elect members. The Ward Committee Resource Book, (2000:25-26), gives clear guidelines on the procedure to elect ward committees including its composition taking into account equitable representation of women and the diverse interest within the ward.

It also stipulates that ward councillor is the chairperson and the committee constitute 10 members. According to the National Framework: Guidelines for Provinces and Municipalities in the Implementation of the Ward Funding Model of 2009, the status quo on establishment of ward committees in terms of provinces since June 2008 is as follows:

**TABLE 3: Total number of established ward committees in South Africa**

Province	Number of Wards	Number of Ward Committees	Percentage Per Province
Eastern Cape	636	6360	100%
Free State	300	2990	99.9%
Gauteng	423	4230	100%
KwaZulu-Natal	771	7710	100%
Limpopo	513	5130	100%
Mpumalanga	365	3650	100%
Northern Cape	174	1740	100%
North-West	365	3650	100%
Western Cape	348	2430	70%

Source: The ward committee Resource Book (2005:25-26)

Napier (2008:173), in research conducted in Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, found that the structuring of ward committees, despite the legal and local rules made, still remains problematic. He cited an example of ward committees who were elected only for a period of one year from 1 July 2006 to 30 July 2007. Piper and Deacon (2008:43), in research conducted in Msunduzi Local Municipality, found that the local political dynamics impact on

the correct establishment of ward committees in three versions of political contestation or competition: (i) inter-party competition, in which political parties vie for the control of the ward committees and where composition of committees is skewed towards supporters of one or another party (ii) intra-party competition in which ward committees have become embroiled in factionalism within political parties, where one or other faction within the party uses the ward committees to secure greater political power, and (iii) policy competition.

### **2.3.2 Objectives of ward committees**

The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 stipulates that the objective of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government. The Act also, requires municipalities to have mechanisms in place in ensuring that communities are involved in the affairs of council. It is through the establishment of ward committees that community participation can be reached in municipalities.

The Ward Committee Resource Book of 2005 summarised the objectives of ward committees as follows:

- ward committee exist as the primary vehicle for public participation in municipal affairs
- they constitute the most feasible and pragmatic base for civic representation, whether sector or geographic
- ward committees form the link between the community and the ward councillors
- by virtue of being a civic society and not party political they can function independently of the structures imposed by party alliances.

Looking into the above mentioned rules and laws on ward committees, it is imperative that municipalities must equip ward committee members with necessary skills for effective consultation with their wider sectoral communities.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

Public participation is a critical aspect in local government, that is why the government of the day has ensured that pieces of legislation and policies are developed to give guidance in that regard. Lack of citizen participation in the affairs of local government, if not taken seriously, could negate and compromise our progressive democracy. Effective participation also requires that municipalities be thoroughly capacitated and have to have the will to promote citizen participation.

Municipalities must therefore ensure that a detailed plan on the implementation of all mentioned pieces of legislation is being put in place to enhance participatory democracy at local level. Municipalities should also structure the administration in the manner that will make provision for community involvement and participation. The importance of effective representation should never be underestimated. The relationship between councillors and the community should not only be towards and during local elections. The community should be involved in shaping the viability of their municipality. Therefore, the role and responsibilities of the ward committees must be clearly understood and in the next chapter that will be discussed.

# **CHAPTER 3: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WARD COMMITTEES**

## **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

“Community participation is one of the cornerstones of effective and accountable governance. This can take various forms. Gradually most municipalities are finding ways to improve community participation. An important practical approach is to establish structures that will allow for meaningful participation” (Nzimakwe and Reddy 2008:670). The objective of ward committees as stipulated in the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, is to enhance participatory democracy in local government. Ward committees have therefore been established in municipalities across South Africa. Ward committees according to the typology of participation mentioned in the previous chapter are citizen advisory structures. Ward committees therefore are advisory bodies and structures that are representative, independent and should perform its functions without fear, favour or prejudice.

In a summary, the ward committee is structure that represents the community in local government. According to the Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:37), the primary function of a ward committee is to be a communication channel for the entire community residing in the respective ward. In the previous chapter the roles and responsibilities were mentioned which includes functions such as to disseminate information of council such as the budget, annual report, performance agreements, and other documents relevant to the community.

Apart from its primary function of communication a ward committee should be an important agent for community action and can play an important part in mobilising partnerships for the development of local projects. According to Nyalunga (2000:45) part of the responsibilities of the ward is to ensure that the electorate directly participate and take part in decisions made by council. They should be part and parcel of the processes and structures that affects their lives as ordinary citizens. Municipalities therefore, should support ward committees and take their roles and functions very seriously. In this chapter,

an analysis will be presented on the roles and responsibilities of ward committees with special reference to Matlosana Local Municipality.

### **3.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF WARD COMMITTEES IN MATLOSANA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

According to prescribed rules and regulations as mentioned in the previous chapter, each municipality is expected to establish ward committees within its area of jurisdiction. Ward committees consist of ten members and the ward councillor serving as a chairperson of the committee.

Election of ward committee members is based on sectoral and or geographical representation. Sectoral representation refers to nomination by interest group, such as, agricultural associations, business associations, sports and culture groupings, women, disabled, youth, etc. to be represented once elected. Geographic representation refers to the nomination of individuals from sparsely populated villages and farms. Emphasis has also been made that the composition of ward committees should not be on political party basis.

Matlosana Local Municipality is situated in Klerksdorp in the North-West Province. It comprises of four towns namely: Klerksdorp, Orkney, Stilfontein and Hartebeesfontein including townships. Matlosana City is also divided into 31 wards and 4 are led by the Democratic Alliance (DA) whereas 27 wards are led by the African National Congress (ANC). The total number of councillors is 61 and the African National Congress (ANC) has the highest representation of 48, Democratic Alliance (DA) 8, Freedom Front Plus (FF) 2, African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) 1, United Democratic Party (UCDP) 1 and Independent Democrats (ID) 1.

Ward Committees were established in June 2006 as follows:

**TABLE 4: Total number of ward committees established in Matlosana Municipality**

AREA	NO.OF WARDS	NO. OF WARD COMMITTEE MEMBERS
KLERKSDORP	05	50
JOUBERTON	10	100
ORKNEY	02	20
KANANA	06	60
STILFONTEIN	02	20
KHUMA	04	40
HARTEBEEFSFONTEIN	02	20
TOTAL	31	310

Source: (Extracted from: [www.matlosana.org](http://www.matlosana.org))

From the above mentioned table the total number of ward committees established in Matlosana Local Municipality is 31 and ward committee members are therefore 310 in number. This clearly shows that in Matlosana, 100% of ward committees have been established. However, there are no proper guidelines approved by the municipality on the establishment of ward committees except those of both provincial and national government.

Studies have shown that there are challenges in the way representation of ward committees is constituted and Matlosana Local Municipality is not an exception to this rule. In research conducted by Piper and Deacon (2008:43-45) in Msunduzi Local Municipality the following have been observed and which is also the case in Matlosana Local Municipality:

Little representation of women, youth and disabled people.

Skewed representation where there is only one party representation in the ward committee.

Ward councillor's role as chairperson manipulating decisions and deliberations to reflect the mandate of political party they represent.

A close relationship between the ward committees and the branches of political parties.

According to Napier (2008:171) in a case study of Tshwane Metro, the accommodation of gender equity, all interest groups and fair geographic representation becomes a practical impossibility.

### **3.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WARD COMMITTEES**

As stipulated in the previous chapter, the Constitution of South Africa sets out clearly the rights of communities to be involved in the affairs of local governance. The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 also, requires municipalities to put mechanisms in place in ensuring that communities are involved in the affairs of council.

The Department of Provincial and Local Government: Ward Committee Resource Book of 2005, outlined the functions of the ward committee as follows:

- (a) To serve as an official specialised participatory structure in the municipality;
  
- (b) To create formal unbiased communication channels as well as co-operative partnerships between the community and the council. This may be achieved as follows:
  - (i) Advise and make recommendations to the ward councillor on matters and policy affecting the ward;
  
  - (ii) Assist the ward councillor in identifying conditions, challenges and the needs of residents;
  
  - (iii) Spread information in the ward concerning municipal affairs such as the budget, integrated development planning, service delivery options and municipal properties;
  
  - (iv) Receive queries and complaints from residents concerning municipal service delivery, communicate it to the council and provide feedback to the community on council's response;
  
  - (v) Ensure constructive and harmonious interaction between the municipality and the community through the use and the co-ordination of ward residents meetings and other community development forums; and

(vi) Interact with other forums and organizations on matters affecting the wards.

(c) To serve as mobilising agent for community action. This may be achieved as follows:

(i) Attending to all matters that affect and benefit the community;

(ii) Acting in the best interest of the community;

(iii) Ensure the active participation of the community in:

(aa) Service payment campaigns;

(bb) Integrated development planning process;

(cc) The municipality's budgetary process;

(dd) Decisions about the provision of municipal services; and

(ee) Decisions about by-laws.

(iv) To draw up the boundaries of a ward and chair zone meetings.

From the above-mentioned core functions of ward committee, in summary, are to encourage participation of community, communicate information to the community and mobilise the community. The Department of Provincial and Local Government: Handbook for Ward Committee of 2005 also explains the role of ward committees as follows:

Increase the participation of local residents in municipal decision-making, as they are a direct and unique link with the council;

Are representative of the local ward, and are not politically aligned;

Should be involved in matters such as IDP processes, municipal performance management, the annual budget, council projects and other key activities and programmes as all these things impact on local people;

Can identify and initiate local projects to improve the lives of people in the ward;

Can support the councillor in dispute resolution, providing information about municipal operations;

Can monitor the performance of the municipality and raise issues of concern to the local ward; and

Can help with community awareness campaigns e.g. waste, water and sewage, payment of fees and charges, as members know their local communities and their needs.

The above mentioned guidelines are very clear on what powers should be delegated to the ward committees. The ward committee members need to be clear about their role and responsibility. However, the ward committees will only be able to execute these tasks if they get support and commitment from officials of council and councillors.

Smith and De Visser (2009:12) mentioned administrative support that can be provided by the municipality to the ward committees such as: provision of identity cards, availing the administrative staff to assist with clerical functions, arrange meeting venues, provision of logistical resources such as office equipment and stationery, advertising community meetings, provision of transport, development and implementation of capacity-building and training programmes for the ward committee members. The guidelines further require the municipality to capacitate ward committees with necessary skills in order to perform their role and responsibilities. The effectiveness of the ward committee system in enhancing participatory democracy will therefore be measured against the above mentioned roles and responsibility. For purposes of this study these roles and responsibilities are clustered and discussed in the following manner:

Communication.

Facilitation of participation in the preparation, implementation and review of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

Participation in preparation of the municipal budget.

Participation in the establishment, implementation and review of the performance management system (PMS)

Participation in making decisions about the provision of municipal services.

### **3.3.1 Communication**

Chapter 4 of both the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 and Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 includes ward committees as a structure that can provide a way for communities to be heard at local level in a structured and institutionalised way. The Department of Provincial and Local Government: Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:37) stipulates that the ward committee should, in a broad sense, be a communication channel for the entire community residing in the respective ward. The Resource Book further discourages ward committees from being a communication channel for neither the ruling party nor any other political party.

In the case of Matlosana Local Municipality, there is no structured ways of communication between council, ward councillors, ward committee and community. The operational plan for ward committees and a communication strategy to give guidance on how ward committees must operate have not yet been established by the municipality.

#### **3.3.1.1 Receiving and recording community complaints**

According to the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act of 2000, it is clear that municipalities must have a system in place to cater for the receipt, processing and consideration of petitions and complaints lodged by members of the local communities.

The Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:51) explained that the ward committee must strive to carry out the full mandate provided by Section 17 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 and seek involvement in the process of receiving, processing and consideration of petitions and complaints. The Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:36) further stated that the ward committee is the appropriate channel through which communities can lodge their complaints and it is obliged to forward such complaints to council in the most effective manner.

According to Reddy and Sikhakane (2008:691) in Buffalo City Municipality, responses from the research conducted by them revealed the following in terms of community complaints:

Some councillors are not visible and local communities do not know how to contact them,

Council does not attend to community complaints,

Councillors and ward committees believe that they are doing a favour to the community when they suppose to report about community complaints ,and Councillors are only concerned with their own survival, serving their own interest and are not concerned with the demands and needs of citizens.

In Matlosana Local Municipality, the ward committees receive community complaints through ward meetings and door to door campaigns. They then record all issues raised and report to the Office of the Speaker.

The observation is that in the Office of the Speaker, the complaints are referred to relevant departments and no follow ups are being made. There is no clear communication strategy in handling community complaints and considering petitions. There is also no clear communication line between the ward committee, councillors, community development workers and the municipality. In a case where a ward councillor is not calling ward meetings it will be difficult for the ward committees to report to council. Looking into the reports of the ward committees there is no indication as to how issues raised by the ward committees are addressed.

#### 3.3.1.2 Dissemination of information to the community

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, as mentioned in the previous chapter, requires municipalities to utilise communication resources such as local newspaper and radio stations, an official website of the municipality including the public library to give information about the affairs of the municipality to the community. Ward committees therefore, as community representative structures, must ensure that the information relevant to community as prescribed by the legislation is published.

The Ward Committee Resource Book further stated that the ward committees have to assist the community in accessing that information and make inputs. According to A Hand Book of Ward Committees by the Department of Provincial and Local Government, the ward committees should find out what the budget timeframe is and when meetings are being held to participate in the budget.

According to Chapter 8 of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2000, specifically section 75(1), the Accounting Officer of a municipality must place at most

10 documents such as the budget, annual report, service delivery agreements, etc. on the website of the municipality. In accordance with the above mentioned function, one of the roles of the ward committee is to spread information in the ward concerning municipal affairs such as budget; therefore it is the responsibility of the ward committees to inform the community on information to be accessed from the website of the municipality. However, the observation is that those documents are not updated and some of those documents cannot be located on the website of Matlosana Local Municipality.

It is also very difficult for the ward committees to ensure that the municipality complies with this requirement due to illiteracy challenges as some ward committee members cannot read or write and also lack access to a computer. According to Smith & De Visser (2009:20), it has been noted that the ability of ward committees to function effectively as communication channels between municipal councils and communities is constrained by poor municipal communication strategies and lack of accessible information at ward level of which that is also considered to be the case in Matlosana Local Municipality.

### **3.3.2. Facilitation of participation in the preparation, implementation and review of the integrated development plan (IDP)**

Chapter 5 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 requires municipalities to have mechanisms, processes and procedures through which local communities can participate in the drafting of the integrated development plan. The Act further stipulates that the local community must be consulted on its developmental needs and priorities. Phillips (1996:24) argues that in local democracy, the most important thing is that local decision-making is best when the decision is of local concerns. The people in the locality are better placed than anyone else to know the issues, problems and conditions, and they are, by definition, the only ones who can know their preferences, priorities and concerns.

The White Paper on Local Government of 1998 explained Integrated Development Planning as a process through which the municipality can establish a development plan for the short, medium and long term. The IDP processes includes the following:

An assessment of the current social, economic and environmental reality in the municipal area,

A determination of community needs through close consultation,

Developing vision for development in the area,

An audit on available resources, skills and capacities,

A prioritisation of community needs in order of urgency and long-term importance,

The development of integrated frameworks and goals to meet these needs,

The formulation of strategies to achieve the goals within specific time frames.

According to Phillips (1996:24) conditions vary significantly from one locality to another: from urban to rural, from inner city to suburbs, from areas that are ethnically mixed to those more ethnically homogeneous, from areas experiencing high unemployment to those where most adults are employed. Therefore communities may prioritise differently according to conditions. For example, one community can prioritise the cleanliness of an area while others will prioritise provision of water to certain number of households.

According to the Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:57) the ward committees can become involved in the IDP process by:

Identifying the key development priorities of the community

Formulating appropriate strategies

Aligning resources with the development priorities.

From the above mentioned roles, it is clear that ward committees must mobilise the community to attend IDP public hearings so that they can voice and prioritise their needs. Ward committees must therefore be part of IDP forums to ensure that those priority needs are considered and budgeted for. The ward committee as a representative structure of the community must be involved in all IDP processes starting with identification of priorities, the planning thereof, allocation of resources including monitoring and implementation. The most important thing is that they must know and understand IDP processes so that they can make the community aware and empower them on how to participate during IDP public hearings. Therefore every ward committee member must understand and have a copy of the IDP document of the municipality.

Everett, Marais and Dube (2010:225) argued that ward committees are often not living up to their potential. They further stated that in Gauteng for example, most respondents from the public revealed that the IDP process might be seen as being too abstract, complicated and distant. The IDP documents were either too long, difficult to understand and not available in commonly spoken languages and this prevent many people to participate and engage in the process. The ward committee must therefore, be more empowered on IDP processes so that they must part that knowledge to the community. The IDP meetings are called at late notice, and that potential participants receive too little information beforehand.

In Matlosana Local Municipality, the observation is that ward committees are members of the IDP forum and they participate during the IDP processes. The programme for IDP consultative meetings is publicised in a local newspaper and notices are send out to communities through councillors and ward committees. However, there are some challenges in Matlosana Local Municipality in relation to the participation of ward committees during IDP processes; most of the ward committees do not have ward plans where they have recorded specific targets for infrastructure development that can assist them to prioritise the needs of the community. The ward plans also can be used to empower the community to plan for itself and participate fully during IDP consultative meetings.

The attendance of the community during IDP consultative meetings is very poor and this indicates that ward committee members are not mobilising the community or encouraging them to attend such meetings. The attendance in town wards is very poor and in some instances it is not there at all as compared to the wards in the township.

During community meetings, the observation also is that language is a serious challenge especially in the township where the dominating language is Setswana. In Matlosana Local Municipality the process is being facilitated in English and also documented in English. The Constitution of South Africa requires that the community must be engaged on the affairs of the municipality and information must be conveyed in a manner that is relevant and understandable which require the use of local language.

After the IDP has been adopted by the council during a council meeting, funds will have to be provided to realise the specific goals set out in the IDP. This entails the preparation for the municipal annual budget. The municipal budget must therefore be linked to the IDP. The

budget must clearly specify the finances available for the developments identified in the IDP for a financial year and be allocated according to various departments. “The IDP has a critical place in government’s on-going attempt to realise the vision in practice, as a key mechanism for hearing local voices, engaging local energies, and-ideally-aligning the budgets and delivery decisions with the local needs”(Everett, Marais and Dube 2010: 226).

### **3.3.3 Participation in the preparation of municipal budget**

Gildenhuis (1997:116) describes a municipal budget as an instrument at the disposal of council, enabling it to guide the economic, social, political and other activities of its community in a certain direction in order to realise predetermined goals and objectives. He further outlined the purpose of a municipal budget as a source of financial information for the community i.e. when a municipal budget is considered by the council and approved, because of the crucial decision that is going to be made affect the lives of individuals within the communities, it becomes a public document and therefore available to everyone in the community.

Although the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 does not give clear roles and responsibilities for ward committee in the budget processes, the Act does require the municipality to ensure that the community knows about the finances of the municipality. The Act further requires municipalities to hold consultative meetings for the community to make their inputs before the final adoption of the budget by council.

As mentioned in the previous chapter that the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 places the local community at the centre of budget process. Ward committees as community representative structures play a pivotal role in this regard. According to the Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:18) it is the responsibility of ward committees to mobilise the community to attend consultative meetings and also to participate during those meetings. Ward committees as community representative structures have to ensure that all stakeholders become part of the budget process.

The observation in Matlosana Local Municipality is that the budget office facilitates a first consultation for the draft budget and the community will then make their comments and input. The second consultation on the final budget is also facilitated in all the sections of the

city. However, the attendance of the community is still poor. The stakeholders such as business institutions, educational institutions, non-profit organisations and civic organisations are not attending budget consultative meetings which are a very serious concern.

This shows that ward committees are not doing much in ensuring that the broader community becomes involved during budget processes.

The challenge realised is that there is no proper coordination of consultative meetings by the officials. The officials of the budget office will just send the dates to the office of the Speaker to mobilise the community and sometimes invitations are sent late to the community. Ward committees end up having no role to play during the budget process and, yet, they are a representative structure. There is a need to workshop ward committees on the budget of the municipality before it can be cascaded down to the community so that they are there to assist the community even in the absence of the councillors or officials.

Smith and De Visser (2010:18-20) argued that there are constraints to the ward committee's role in relation to communicating municipal budget information, which is usually only available in highly technical and inaccessible formats, and is rarely packaged in such a way as to provide useful information on budget allocations at ward level. They further indicated that in most instances, ward committees' effectiveness is constrained by limitations in members' levels of education, skills and expertise. A skills audit of 373 ward committee members in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro carried out by the Project for Conflict Resolution and Development in 2008 found that only 34 members had any post training or qualifications and 59 members did not have a matric qualification. This clearly shows that there are serious constraints for the ward committees to function effectively in enhancing participatory democracy, especially when the roles of ward committees as currently applied is considered.

### **3.3.4 Participation in the establishment, implementation and review of the performance management system (PMS)**

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 required that, after the annual budget has been approved by council, a municipality must prepare operational plans and allocate the resources. The operational plans should set out the detailed planning for each project which should include a complete set of measures, including key performance areas (KPA's), development objectives, key performance indicators (KPI's), performance targets, target dates and who takes responsibility for what. All these formats of information form the basis for the performance management system.

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 further mandates the municipalities to involve the community in the development, implementation and review of the municipality's performance management system. The Act further requires municipalities to allow the community to participate particularly in the setting of appropriate key performance indicators and performance targets for the municipality as they are based on their priority needs. Involving communities in developing some municipal key performance indicators increases the accountability of the municipality, which is also critical in terms of participatory democracy.

At the end of the year the municipality needs to present a performance report to the communities reflecting actual performance against targeted performance, together with an indication of what steps are to be taken to improve on current performance.

The role of the ward committees in this regard as set out in Ward Committee Resource Book is that, through the IDP forum ward committees must discuss the performance management system of the municipality and its implementation and review.

The Ward Committee Resource Book (2005:60) outlined the following three stages in which the ward committee can play a key part in performance management:

Planning: Work closely with ward councillor and other community organisations, to identify priority needs and make sure that these needs are included in the budget proposals and plans.

Follow-up and feedback: Insist on regular report on municipal projects and services to the ward committee and at a public meeting to keep residents informed of progress and problems. Make constructive suggestions for improvement and, if necessary, organise the community to help get the job done.

Yearly performance review: Council should report regularly to the ward committees and communities on their budget and performance reviews, as part of community meetings. In addition, if the committee is not receiving regular performance reports from council then the matter must be taken up with the Mayor.

From the above mentioned roles and duties of the ward committee, it is clear that the municipalities are obliged to involve the ward committees in setting key performance indicators, targets and the monitoring thereof.

The Resource Book further guide the municipalities to establish IDP forums and ward committees must form part of the forum in order to monitor municipal performance according to key performance indicators and targets set by the municipality. Thus, ward committee exist as the principal or main form of community participation in this particular matter.

However, in Matlosana Local Municipality, the community is not being engaged when performance indicators are set. There is no involvement of the community at all in the performance management processes. There is a strategic unit that deals with the performance management system of the city which is ultimately adopted by council. There is no stage, according to the agenda of IDP forums, where the performance management system of the municipality is being discussed.

The challenge is that the administration set targets for itself according to the IDP and budget of the municipality. This is contrary to what the Act requires. The key performance areas are not linked to the wards and therefore very difficult for the ward committees to monitor the progress and performance of the municipality. Ward committees, therefore, cannot be expected to provide qualitative feedback on municipal delivery strategies and performance to the community.

According to Reddy and Sikhakane (2008:691) in Buffalo City Municipality, questionnaire responses revealed that the municipal functionaries do not give account of their actions and they are not responsive to the needs of the community. Some of them are not public spirited and lack commitment to perform their duties and responsibilities.

### **3.3.5 Participation in making decision about provision of municipal services.**

Ward committees as a representative structure of the community, can play a pivotal role in improving service delivery. The Constitution of South Africa outlines the rights of the community to participate in decision making processes of the municipality. According to Smith and De Visser (2009:20) one of the key tests of effectiveness of ward committees is their impact on council decision-making. A major service that must be delivered by the municipality to the wards includes: water, electricity, sanitation, storm -water drainage and maintenance of infrastructure.

Ward committees therefore needs to advice council and make inputs for the delivery of those services. Public participation includes people's involvement throughout the decision – making process.

“Citizens are regarded as participants in policy-making. Therefore they have to express, through ward committees and stakeholder forums, their views before, during and after the policy development process .This will ensure that policies reflect community preferences as far as possible” (Nzimakwe and Reddy, 2008:675).

In the case of Matlosana Local Municipality, ward committees submits reports and recommendations to the Office of the Speaker. The reports will then be presented to council as an item. However council will only consider the reports but no resolutions will be taken on the report for further processing and implementation by the relevant departments. This makes it difficult for the ward committee to receive responses on issues they raised. Municipal By-Laws and policies are sometimes passed without community consultation. Therefore, this critical aspect of public participation, i.e. participation in decision-making is still lacking in as far as ward committees are concerned.

### **3.4. CONCLUSION**

Public participation is not a one-time event such as a public hearing but, it is an on-going process that requires adequate time and resources. The municipalities must therefore strive to empower and to strengthen ward committees as a structure that is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that public participation is implemented. It is also important for all the structures in public participation, including the ward committees, that they must understand their roles and responsibilities in order to be effective. The ward committees are tasked with a number of responsibilities as mentioned in this chapter and without the support and proper systems in place those tasks will never be achieved. It is therefore necessary to measure the effectiveness of the ward committee system in enhancing participatory democracy, specifically in regard to Matlosana Local Municipality. This is subsequently discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVENESS OF WARD COMMITTEES: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

### **4.1. BACKGROUND**

The ward committees as defined in the previous chapter are important communicative channels for informing municipalities on the needs, aspirations, potential and frustrations of the communities. They are mandated to participate actively in the core business of the municipality such as Integrated Development Planning, Municipal Budgeting and Municipal Performance Management process. Many studies, however, have shown that the ward committees are not functioning as required and intended by the legislation in enhancing participatory democracy. According to Reddy and Sikhakane in a case study of the ward committees in Buffalo City Municipality (2008:692), ward committee members do not receive information, training and support from the municipality and some councillors do not work well with the committee members. It will therefore be very difficult for the ward committee to play a meaningful role in enhancing participation if it is not adequately facilitated as a structure that represents the community. Napier (2008:179) also, in his case study of Tshwane Metro argued that from the evidence available, Tshwane ward committees are not delivering the results as expected from them.

In their case study of Gauteng, Everett, Marais & Dube (2010:239) cited that the ward committees are often not living up to their potential. Poor commitment among officials and lack of skills and resources seems to be one of the factors that hamper and discourage public participation. This clearly shows that the challenges ward committees are facing affect their effectiveness and that includes the level of education, skills and expertise, lack of resources such as internet connections, computers, office space, etc. Many municipalities appear not to be able to budget adequately for such resources.

According to six case studies conducted by Smith and De Visser in Local Government Bulletin (2009:14-15) it was argued that out of the ward committees of six municipalities only two are functioning reasonably effective, meaning they meet regularly and there is some sense of common purpose and achievement in their meetings and activities. It was further stated that the need for further training of members was highlighted as a critical constraint to the

effectiveness of ward committees. In some cases ward committees had received no training at all.

Recently the Deputy President of South Africa , Kgalema Motlanthe ,addressing the National Council of Provinces confirmed to Members of Parliament that, “The effectiveness of ward committees was also impeded by low levels of education, skills and expertise, lack of access of resources including computers and internet connections” (Service Delivery Magazine: 22nd March 2011). The Deputy President further confirmed that in many instances however, local municipalities have failed to set up the ward committees. Where they exist, some remain excluded from the decision –making process.

Smith and De Visser (2009:15) summarised a range of concerns commonly expressed around the practical functioning of the ward committees, which have implications for their effectiveness in enhancing public participation as follows:

“Difficulties in sustaining ward committee members’ participation and interest. In some cases meetings are not held or there are insufficient members to constitute a quorum.

A high turnover of ward committee members as members loses interest or relocates for work opportunities.

The chairpersons (ward councillor) not being available to attend meetings or failing to call meetings.

No clear Terms of Reference for ward committees, resulting in ad hoc responses to any matters that arise in the wards.

Poor working relationship between ward councillors and committees, with ward councillors sometimes feeling threatened by the committees.

Related perception that some ward committee members have aspirations to become ward councillors, to the extent that they may deliberately try to undermine the ward councillor and derail ward committee processes.

Insufficient administrative and other resources allocated to ward committees to enable them to function effectively – for example, ward committee members having no money for transport to attend meetings.

Minutes of meetings not being taken.

Wards being spread over vast areas, particularly in rural areas; which poses challenges for both the practicalities of ward committees' meetings as well as how the ten person structure can be of the entire ward area.

The term of office of ward committees being two years or less, leading to a brain drain as experienced and capacitated members is regularly replaced”.

It is against this background that this chapter will reflect an analysis of the assessment done in relation the effectiveness of ward committees in Matlosana Local Municipality. The following aspects with regards to the effectiveness and functionality of ward committees in Matlosana Local Municipality will be analysed:

Support from council.

Skills development.

Ward committee meetings.

Access to information.

Participation in Integrated Development Planning and budgeting.

Responsiveness of officials to citizen's complaints.

The relationship between the ward committees and community stakeholders.

According to the booklet for the ward committees by DPLG North-West: “Committed to your community” (2006:4), for the ward committees to be functional and effective throughout the year, the following important aspects are to be adhered to:

“A full complement of the ward committee is maintained throughout the term of office. This can be achieved by ensuring that vacancies are filled immediately they occur and, members attend meetings regularly.

Scheduled meetings take place as planned.

Decisions/recommendations are made on issues discussed, Decisions taken should be within the ambit of the ward committee to take and implement.

Minutes /reports are produced from the above-mentioned meetings and submitted to the Office of the Speaker on a regular basis.

Ward meetings are held regularly for consultation and report back to the communities.

Ward committees ‘full involvement in the process of IDP, LED, budget, municipal service delivery and PMS’.

The above mentioned aspects are guidelines that can assist the municipalities in ensuring that ward committees become effective and functional. The effectiveness of ward committees cannot be measured only by the number of attendance of meetings but, by how ward committees can influence the decision making processes in ensuring that the needs and aspirations of communities are met. Therefore, in this chapter the analysis will be made based on the challenges faced by the ward committee in executing their tasks and how these challenges affect their effectiveness. The focus of this chapter will be on the evidence and information revealed from the respondents in Matlosana Local Municipality on the effectiveness of ward committees in enhancing participatory democracy.

The data will be analysed based on the following:

#### Availability of resources

In line with the above mentioned requirements, the ward committees must be provided with all the necessary resources in order to be effective, such as proper venue, stationery for reports and minute writing, computers and photocopy machines, etc. These resources will assist ward committees to:

- write their own reports and correspondence that are supposed to be sent to the municipality and community or stakeholders,
- record minutes on decisions and recommendations during the committee meetings that will be submitted to the Office of the Speaker,
- record their schedule of meetings, agendas and feedback to the community and also programmes and projects of their wards.
- record community complaints and comments during public meetings and door to door work, and
- prepare invitations to invite the community for public meetings, campaigns or awareness on issues of the municipality.
- hold meetings and operate in a proper venue for their day to day activities.

All the above mentioned resources are important for the ward committee to function in an effective way.

#### Capacity development

As mentioned in the previous chapter, ward committees must participate fully in the process of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), Local Economic Development (LED), municipal budget, municipal service delivery programmes and projects and Performance Management System (PMS). Municipalities must therefore have the necessary development programme for ward committees to enable them to discuss and engage properly on all of these aspects. The ward committees must be able to understand and analyse the relevant documents in order to participate and engage fully in the processes. The ward committees must be capacitated with all the by-laws and municipal policies that affect the community in order to allow them to mobilise the community to have input before they can be passed by council. This will make it easier for the ward committees to give feedback to the community and where the community do not understand, the ward committees will be able to clear those concerns with the knowledge they have gained.

#### Ward Committee meetings

It has been emphasised in the previous chapter that the ward committees are expected to meet regularly. For the ward committees to be effective as mentioned above, they are expected to meet regularly for consultation and to give feedback to the community. As mentioned above, there must be records on the schedule of meetings and attendance register and that will be used as an instrument to make an assessment on the attendance. The analysis will be on the number of meetings held and attendance of the ward committee members to the meeting.

#### Access to information

For the ward committees to be effective, they must be given information about the affairs of the municipality especially those that affect the community. In a nutshell, the municipality must practise transparency. For the ward committees to function

effectively as a communication channel between the council and the community there must be a municipal communication strategy that gives clear guidelines on how information must flow to the ward level.

As the ward committees are expected and also required to have a full involvement in the process of the IDP, LED, municipal budget, municipal service delivery and PMS, the municipality must ensure that relevant information on all these aspects is given to the ward committees. Therefore, the ward committees cannot be denied information for them to be effective.

#### Participation in Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Budget

Participation of the ward committee members is crucial in the above-mentioned aspects as the plan and the budget of the municipality is based on the needs of the community. The analysis will be done on how the ward committee members are engaged in the processes of the budget and the IDP.

#### Influence on decision-making

All the issues and concerns including resolutions taken by the ward committees must be considered by the municipality. As mentioned from the above mentioned criteria, these issues and resolutions must be submitted to the municipality through the Office of the Speaker. Therefore an analysis will be made of the influence that the ward committee have in decision making of the municipality based on their submissions.

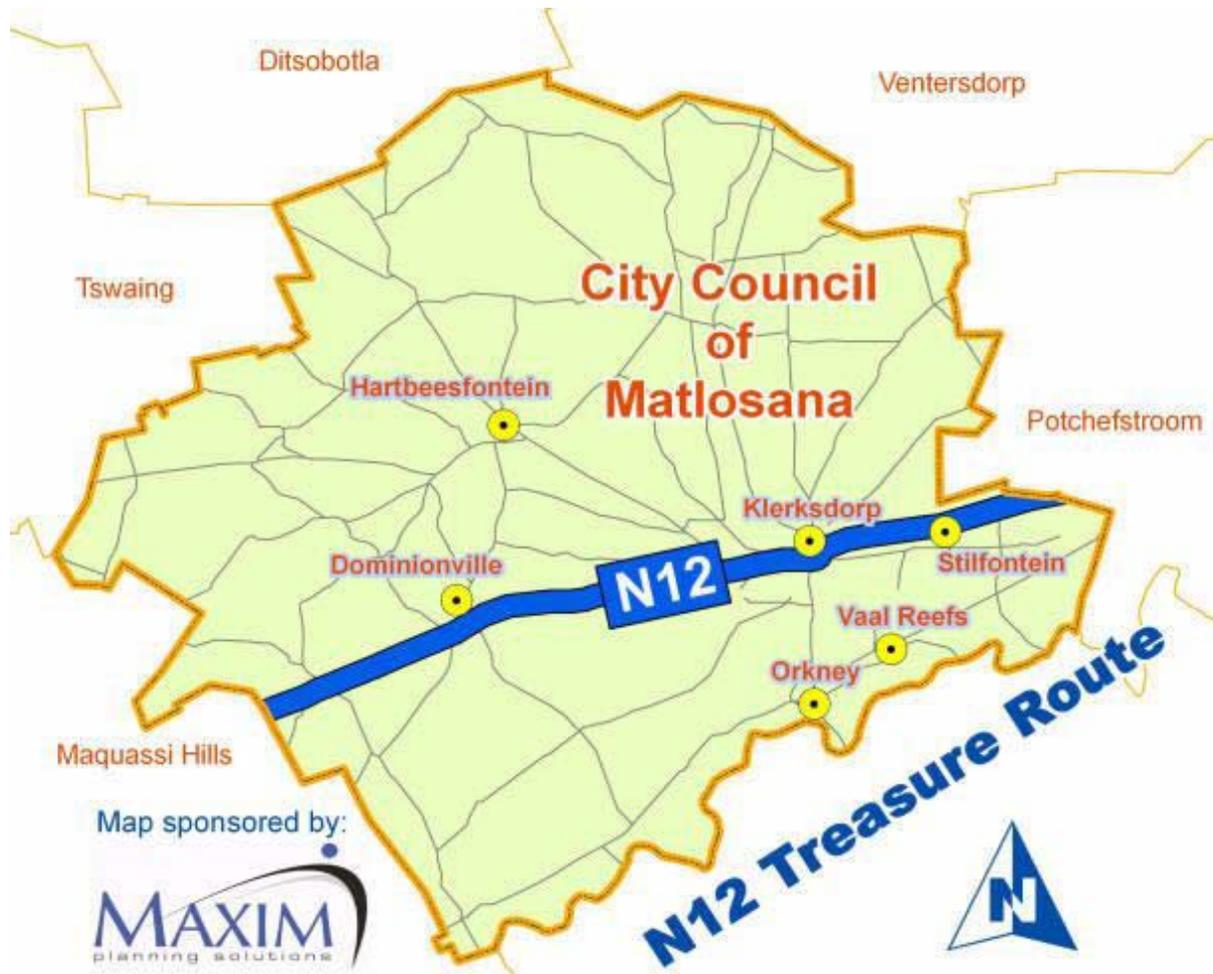
## **4.2 OVERVIEW OF MATLOSANA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

### **4.2.1 Geographic profile**

“The City of Matlosana is situated approximately 164km South West of Johannesburg on the N12 highway and covers about 3 625km. The municipality was classified as category B municipality by the Municipal Demarcation Board in terms of section 4 of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act; 1998. The municipality includes Klerksdorp, Orkney, Stilfontein and Hartebeesfontein. The city is part of the Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District

Municipality in the North West Province. It was called Klerksdorp municipality and the name was changed to City of Matlosana on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2005.”([www.matlosana.org](http://www.matlosana.org)). Below is the geographic location of Matlosana Local Municipality reflected on a map:

**FIGURE: 1**



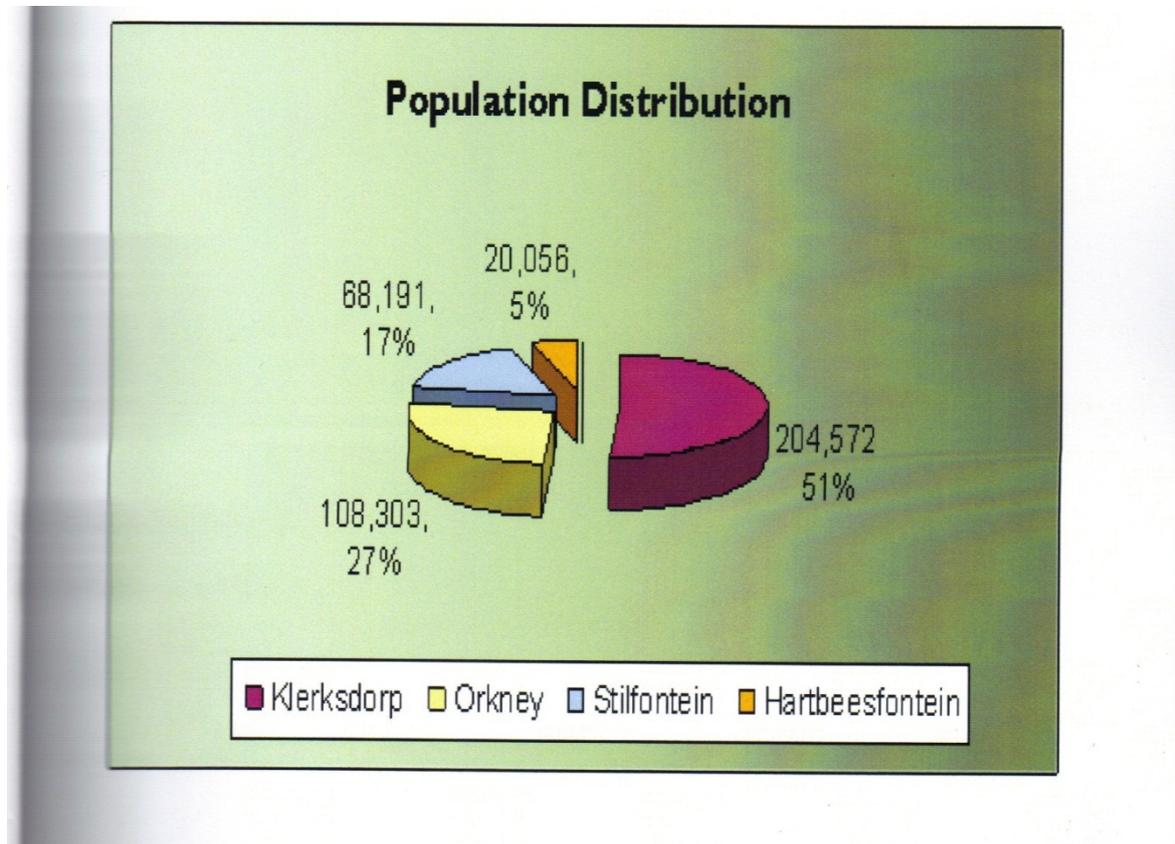
Source: {Extracted from: [www.matlosana.org](http://www.matlosana.org)}

#### 4.2.2 Demographic profile

“According to estimates based on STATS SA/GLOBAL INSIGHT as stated in the annual report of Matlosana municipality, the total population of Matlosana is estimated at 401,122 people of which 353,790 (88,2%) is urbanized and 47,332 (11,8%) is rural”([www.matlosana.org](http://www.matlosana.org)).

The current and expected urban and rural population distributions for the Matlosana area are as follows:

**FIGURE: 2**



Source: (Extracted from: Annual Report of the City of Matlosana 2009/2010:3)

### 4.2.3 Delimitations of wards

The municipality is further demarcated into 31 wards as follows:

**TABLE 5: Delimitation of wards**

AREAS	WARD NO.	Total No. of Ward committees established	Leading Political Party
Klerksdorp	1,9,11 and 12	4	Democratic Alliance(DA)
Jouberton	13,14,15,16,17,18, 19,20,21,22 and 23,	11	African National Congress (ANC)
Stilfontein	8	1	Democratic Alliance(DA)
Khuma and Buffel Mines	4,5,6 , 7 and 10	5	African National Congress (ANC)
Orkney	30	1	Democratic Alliance(DA)
Kanana and Vaal Reefs Mines	24,25,26,27,28,29 and 31	7	African National Congress (ANC)
Haartebeesfontein and Tigane	2 and 3	2	African National Congress (ANC)

Source: (Extracted from: [www.matlosana.org](http://www.matlosana.org))

The establishment of ward committees in Matlosana Local Municipality has been good. For example, the table above shows that in Matlosana, 100% of ward committees have been established in 2005. In total there are 310 ward committee members in Matlosana Local Municipality. There are 61 councillors (31 ward and 30 proportional representatives).

The African National Congress has a strong majority with 47 councillors, the Democratic Alliance (DA) 9, Freedom Front Plus (FF) 2, African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) 1, Independent Democrats (ID) 1 and United Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) 1. Out of 31

wards, 25 wards which are primarily township and mines including farms are led by the African National Congress and 6 wards which are town and areas that are developed are led by the Democratic Alliance ([www.matlosana.org](http://www.matlosana.org)).

It must be noted that the study was conducted since 2009 and the above mentioned information is based on the demarcation of 2006 to 2011 during which time Matlosana Local Municipality consisted of 31 wards. According to the delimitation of wards applicable since the 2011 municipal elections, the wards in Matlosana Local Municipality have been increased to 35. Data for this study was collected before the current delimitation and as such this study does not reflect the composition of ward committees since the 2011 municipal elections.

### **4.3 DATA COLLECTING METHOD AND INSTRUMENTS**

#### **4.3.1 Primary Data**

The question method was used in the form of questionnaires to collect primary data. Provision for comments and additional information was created at the end of questionnaires to allow the respondents to cover information they deemed fit to be covered for the purpose of the study, which might not be covered by the questionnaire.

#### **4.3.2 Sample**

The ward committees and community members were selected from all the wards in order to ensure fair representation. Officials of the municipality were also selected especially those who are working directly with the ward committees. The names and identifying features of all the selected respondents have been withheld to ensure anonymity. Questionnaires were distributed to the following respondents through the assistance of officials in the Office of the Speaker during meetings and gatherings.

31 Secretaries of ward committees from the ward,

31 Ward councillors,

31 community members one from each ward

3 officials in the Office of the Speaker who deal directly with the ward committee programmes,

1 official who is an IDP coordinator

1 official who is a communication specialist.

## **4.4 ANALYSIS**

### **4.4.1 Availability of resources**

According to the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, municipalities must use its resources, and annually allocate funds in its budget, as may be appropriate, to develop capacity and to achieve effective community participation in matters of local governance. Considering the discussion in the previous chapter and all pieces of legislation on community participation it is evident that it is the responsibility of the municipality to ensure that ward committees are effective and functional. The municipality needs to give necessary support to the ward committees in order for those structures to be effective. The following are examples of administrative support that municipality should give as mentioned in the Booklet for Ward Committees '*Committed to your Community*' by DPLG North West (2006:5):

Provision of stationery-notebooks, writing pads, minutes-writing books, typing of minutes, delivery of notices, etc.,

Provision of transport where and when necessary,

Proper venues/offices with appropriate furniture for holding meetings,

Provision of funds in the budget (annually) to administer the ward committees,

An official/s designated to deal administratively with ward committees (The official/s must also attend some of the ward committee meetings on rotation to provide advice and administrative support),

Reimbursement of out of pocket expenses incurred by members and or, payment of stipend.

#### **4.4.1.1. Provision of resources**

In Matlosana Local Municipality, the responses from questionnaires revealed that the municipality is doing quite well in resourcing the ward committees. It was revealed that all

the ward committee members received name tags, uniform and stationery. A question was posed to the respondents on whether the municipality is supporting the ward committees with stationery and 62% responded positively. However, observation revealed that the ward committees do not have access to computers, photocopier, telephone, fax and internet to access information.

#### 4.4.1.2. Provision of transport

Similar to what Everret, Marais & Dube (2010:239) have observed with reference to a Gauteng case study, in semi-rural areas, meeting times and transport difficulties hindered participation and Matlosana Local Municipality is not an exception.

One of the respondents commented that transport for the committees to attend ward meetings is also a challenge in Matlosana. Some of the wards that are widely spread, for example, ward 3 in Tigane that consists of mainly farm areas, find it difficult to converge for a meeting or to run a ward programme.

#### 4.4.1.3. Stipend or out of pocket expense

The study revealed that ward committee members receive the stipend of R500, 00 every month based on the submission of their reports. According to the Portfolio Agenda of the municipality dated 10 August 2011, the municipality considered to implement a funding framework as gazetted in North West Extraordinary Provincial Gazette of 12 July 2010. Although the municipality seems to be doing well in giving necessary support and resources to the ward committees there are still some challenges. Even though the ward committee members receive a stipend of R500, 00 per month, some respondents commented that the money is not enough to cover transport and cell phone airtime as some of the ward committee members stay far from council buildings where council meetings are held which makes it difficult for them to attend regularly. Some remarks made by the respondents were the following: “the council should increase stipend of the ward committees in order to be more committed to their work”, “the stipend given to the ward committees members is not adequate to effectively execute their functions and the policy on how they operate need to be developed”.

#### 4.4.1.4. Administrative support from municipal officials

In accordance with the legislation, the Office of the Speaker is responsible for giving resources and necessary support to the ward committees. However, the attendance register of ward committee meetings has revealed that in most cases the officials in the Office of the Speaker are not attending the ward committee meetings to give administrative assistance. The following remark was made by a respondent: “the provincial government should also play a role because the council ignores us”.

#### 4.4.1.5. Office space

There is a still challenge in regard to the office space where the ward committees must operate. The study revealed that out of 31 wards only 15 wards have offices in which they can operate but those offices are not resourced. A question was posed to the respondents to state which venues are they using for meetings and 52% responded that they are using community halls while 35% responded that they are using schools. This clearly shows that 87% of the ward committees do not have their own venues for the meetings and operations. Some of the remarks made by the respondents were the following: “I think in all Matlosana areas ward committee members must be given an office with all the equipment e.g. computers, phone, fax and photo copy machine so that they can access information and it will also make information to flow”.

However, according to the agenda of the Portfolio Committee of Corporate Services of the municipality dated 10 August 2011, the municipality is currently investigating how to ensure that ward committees are provided with offices where they can operate. The council considered also to utilise old council buildings and to allocate funds for the renovations of those buildings especially those that have been vandalised.

#### **4.4.2. Capacity Development**

The ward committees can only be effective when they have the necessary skills and capacity to perform their duties and functions. As mentioned above, legislation obliges municipalities

to develop capacity for the ward committees; municipalities must therefore prepare the necessary development program.

The Ward Committee Resource Book by DPLG (2005:68) gave examples of training development that can be offered to the ward committees, such as:

- Literacy skills
- Democracy and community participation
- Municipal services ,structures,legislation,payment of services
- Principle of good governance
- Functions of the ward committees
- Leadership
- Conflict management and negotiation skills.

In Matlosana Local Municipality, the study has revealed that funding has been a serious constraint in training the ward committees. However the ward committees have received training on budget and IDP from the Southern Business School funded by the Development Bank of South Africa. The Department of Provincial and Local Government (now Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs) have also assisted the municipality to give training on all legislation on local government such as the Municipal Systems Act, Structures Act, the Constitution and Municipal Finance Management Act. There is also on-going training of ward committees by various departments of the municipality on the affairs and policies of the municipality. A question was posed to the respondents as to whether they have attended training on council policies and by-laws and 84% responded positively.

Since 2006, according to the quarterly reports of the public participation unit in the Office of the Speaker, the following training programmes were rolled out:

- Induction programme
- Integrated Development Planning
- Budget
- Supply Chain Management
- Water Services.

Although the municipality has tried to train the ward committees there are still ward committees who cannot read or write which makes it difficult for the municipality to capacitate them. The municipality can utilise ABET training to close that gap. There are no annual capacity building and programmes conducted in response to the needs assessment for each member. As a result, more public education is needed. Some of the respondents complained that it is difficult to understand council documents as they are not written in commonly spoken languages. According to Ababio (2004:283) the strategy to use different languages commonly used by communities in public notices and correspondences, makes it easier for members of the public to participate in the activities of their municipality.

#### **4.4.3 Ward committee meetings**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the ward committees are expected to hold ward committee meetings regularly and submit the report to the Office of the Speaker. The observation is that ward committee meetings are held on a monthly basis in various venues and different dates and times that suits the dynamics of every ward. However, there are challenges such as poor attendance of members to the meetings. A question was posed to the respondents on the attendance of the ward committee members to the ward committee meetings and 56% responded positively and 44% responded negatively. This shows a high percentage in terms of none attendance of members. The reason might be that the stipend is too little to cater for transport or that the timing is not good.

The ward councillors as chairpersons of the ward committees are not calling meetings as expected, however. Some of the remarks made by the respondents were the following: “the ward committees should have their own chairperson instead of being chaired by councillors”. In town wards, observation revealed that meetings are often held. In wards that are led by the DA they prefer to communicate with the community through leaflets and flyers rather than community meetings and meetings are held quarterly. The study revealed that the community in town wards don’t prefer to attend public as compared to the ward in the townships.

#### **4.4.4 Access to information**

For the ward committees to perform their duties effectively as a communication channel between the municipality and community, the municipality must have a communication strategy in disseminating information. The municipality, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is constitutionally bound to give information to the community. Ababio (2004:286) further argued that community participation can only be possible if the community is provided with timely, accessible and accurate information. He further stated that community participation in municipal government and administration requires that the community be well informed about participation and government issues. This can only be achieved if there is a communication strategy and policy which give guidance on channels for communication.

As mentioned earlier the ward committees are agents of communication between the community and municipality. In Matlosana Local Municipality however, the study revealed that there is no communication strategy that gives guidance on how the ward committees are provided with information and equally how the ward committees should disseminate it to the community. This affects the effectiveness of the ward community in communicating with the community especially when there is no guiding tool. Some of the remarks made by the respondents were as follows: “we receive the information very late from the municipality; ward committee members are taken for granted and are not treated well like other government structures”.

However, the trend has been that the ward community receive information through a ward councillor and Office of the Speaker and disseminate it through a community meeting. Everatt, Marais & Dube (2010:238) in their case study of Gauteng, observed that municipal documents were either too long, difficult to understand as they are written in highly technical concepts, not available in commonly spoken languages, or not available at all.

This makes it difficult for the ward committees to disseminate information that they are not sure of and do not understand. The Matlosana Local Municipality also, according to the observation, is faced with the same challenges, especially the issue of language.

#### **4.4.5 Participation in integrated development plan (IDP)**

The ward committees must be involved in the IDP by being part of the IDP representative forum. According to the Hand Book for Ward Committees (2005:33), the IDP representative forum is a forum that provides opportunity to the stakeholders to represent the interests of their constituencies. Everett, Marais and Dube (2010:224), explained that the IDP is meant to provide a demand-driven approach to delivery, where citizens map out and prioritize needs, which feeds into local planning and budgeting, and ensures a close match between supply and demands. The ward committees must therefore, be fully involved in the IDP processes in order to represent the community by registering their needs and priorities. The ward committees are also required to mobilise the community to attend the IDP consultative meeting where the community will be given an opportunity to register their needs and priorities.

In Matlosana Local Municipality the respondents indicated that the ward committees are members of the IDP representative forum. The attendance is good and most of the respondents have shown that ward committees understand the IDP processes. According to the records the municipality it is one of the best municipalities in the North-West Province in terms of community participation in IDP processes. However, the attendance of the community during consultative meetings is poor which revealed that ward communities are not effective on mobilising and encouraging the community to attend such meetings. A question was posed as to whether the ward committees are members of the IDP representative forum and 84% responded positively.

In terms of the budget it was previously mentioned that the ward committees as a public representative structure must ensure that the needs of the community they represent must be given financial allocation by the municipality. Needs and priorities of the community must be budgeted in terms of projects identified to address such needs. Ward committees must be thoroughly empowered on the budget of the municipality so that when they popularise it they must be able to answer queries and questions that may arise.

According to Reddy and Sikhakane (2008:692), attendance at IDP and budget hearings or consultations with the communities are poor in urban and peri-urban areas and better in rural areas. This can be attributed to the fact that people are working in urban areas. This is

not the exception in Matlosana Local Municipality. In town wards the community and ward committees don't attend at all and sometimes meetings had to be postponed due to non-attendance.

#### **4.4.6 Participation in the Performance Management Systems**

As mentioned in the previous chapter the ward committees and residents have important roles to play in the planning and the delivery of municipal services. The ward committee can play a key part in performance management such as in planning by working closely with the ward councillor and community to identify the priority needs and make sure that those needs are included in the budget proposals and plans. They can further make follow-ups and ensure that they receive feedback on municipal projects and services. A question was posed to the respondents as to whether the ward committees do receive regular performance reports and 69% of them responded negatively. This clearly shows that the ward committees do not receive regular reports on municipal performance and that makes it difficult for them to give feedback to the community on progress or failures of the municipality. Some of the remarks made by the respondents were as follows: "never-but-never get response from municipal departments on burning issues please help urgently". This shows desperation of the ward committee for their concerns to be addressed.

#### **4.4.7 Influence in decision making**

The ward committees are a conduit for citizen participation in the decision making processes. Decisions made by the ward committees during their meetings are not legally binding on the municipality. However, by virtue of the fact that the ward committees represent the community, the decisions and views of the ward committee must be given serious consideration especially because they are also expected to give feedback to the community. According to the DPLG Resource Book of Ward Committees of 2005, issues raised by the ward committees go to council through the ward councillor who will raise them with the Office of the Speaker in the form of a report. The Office of the Speaker will in turn process them to council through various departments and portfolio committees. A question was posed to the respondents to find out as to whether the officials of the municipality always responded timeously on issues raised by the ward committees and 84% responded negatively. This clearly shows that issues that concern the ward committees are

not taken seriously by the municipality. Even on the comments made by the respondents concern was raised that issues raised by the ward committee are not addressed by the municipality.

Everett, Smith & Marais (2009:20) argued that, one of the key tests of the effectiveness of the ward committees is their impact on council decision-making. He further stated that available research suggests that the ward committees are in general not having a significant influence on the decisions made by council and how resources are allocated at ward level. One of the impediments to the ward committees having an influence on council decision-making appears to be the limited power most ordinary councillors have within the deliberation process of the municipal councils. Matlosana is not exception to this, the study have revealed that issues raised by the ward committee are not further deliberated at the level of council meetings hence they are not being addressed.

#### **4.5 SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES**

Although Matlosana Local Municipality seems to be doing relatively well in terms of community participation, the ward committees are still faced with the following constraints:

##### **Lack of accountability**

The ward committee meetings are not held regularly in most of the wards. Some of the ward councillors as chairpersons of the ward committees are not calling meetings and that denies the ward committee members information that are supposed to be disseminated to the community. Regular feedback on implementation of policies and developmental projects by the municipality to the ward committees is minimal. There is little accountability as ward committees and communities are not empowered on how to hold the municipality accountable. This can therefore result in manipulation, corruption, waste and inefficiencies. For the ward committees to be effective, they must be kept abreast from time to time on issues that affect the community including the activities of the municipality through the ward councillor.

### Poor attendance of meetings by ward committee members

The attendance of ward committee members of meetings is very poor and one of the respondents cited that it is due to lack of transport as the stipend is insufficient to cater for transport. The attendance of the ward committee members at the ward committee meetings in wards that are widely spread is also very poor. According to the respondents the stipend is given to the ward committees without considering the dynamics of individual wards.

### Noward committee meeting procedures

The study also revealed that there is no uniformity in the way meetings are being facilitated. The agenda of ward committee meetings differs from one ward to the other. The issues that are normally discussed are issues raised by the community during community meetings, such as water, electricity, roads, houses, etc. The reports will then be made based on the discussion in the meeting and will be submitted to the Office of the Speaker. There is no standard agenda to guide the ward committees on what to discuss on a monthly basis. Apart from the issues raised by the community or service delivery issues, there are municipal documents such as the budget, annual report, and IDP that can be discussed by the ward committees during their meetings. According to the observation some of those documents are not discussed during ward committee meetings, for example, the annual report of the municipality. Smith and De Visser (2009:32) in their case study cited that the agenda of a meeting of a ward committee is usually decided by the ward councillor as the chairperson of the committee, and then the secretary takes minutes and compile a report to the Office of the Speaker. That clearly shows the system is open for manipulation as the ward councillor can put his issues on the agenda which can be that of his political party. It is also one of the challenges in Matlosana, if a councillor is not calling meetings, the committee do not sit.

### Lack of support and accountability by municipal officials

Officials of the municipality are also not attending ward committee meetings to assist and to give necessary support. The ward committees are expected to write minutes and reports without the assistance of the officials. They then have to submit the reports to the Office of

the Speaker. One councillor made a comment that they are frustrated by the fact that the issues raised by the ward committees are not responded to nor addressed by the officials.

#### No communication strategy

The Municipality does not have a communication strategy where there is a clear communication channel between the council, the ward committee, the councillor and the community. The other challenge is that, there are no proper procedures on handling petitions and community complaints that are directed to the municipality. There is no clear mechanism or system in place for the council to discuss the issues raised by the ward committee in order for the council to take resolution or resolve them. This makes it difficult for the ward committees to keep track on issues that has been addressed and those that needs to be addressed.

#### Lack of resources

Lack of resources such as office space, computers, printers and photocopiers has been constraint to ward committees to enable them to function effectively. Most ward committees are utilising school classrooms, community halls and sometimes the house of a ward councillor for their day to day operations. The challenge is that those halls and schools also are not resourced for the ward committees to function effectively.

#### Insufficient allocation of funds

According to the respondents, the stipend of R500, 00 per month, which is given to the ward committee members, is not sufficient enough to cater for transport, air time and other resources. This results in the poor attendance of the ward committee members at meetings and activities. The performance of ward committees of their roles and responsibilities is therefore affected.

#### Lack of access to information

Ward committees play no role in the performance management system of the municipality. The officials of the municipality do not provide information on the performance system of the municipality to the ward committees. This makes it difficult for the ward committees to

assess and monitor performance of the municipality against the integrated development plan.

#### Minimal influence on decision making

The municipality is still faced with the challenge of lack of participation of the ward committee in decision making process of the municipality. For the ward committees to send reports to the Office of the Speaker is not enough. There is no platform created where the ward committees are given opportunity to discuss those issues with the council. The trend is that those reports are sent to the Office of the Speaker and are not forwarded to council meetings for further discussions by council. Council therefore, is not able to discuss and resolve on those issues.

#### Limitations in terms of the level of education

A further challenge that affects the ward committee's effectiveness is that some members have a low level of education and skills in order to execute their tasks as expected and required by the law. In Matlosana Local Municipality all correspondence including documents such as the budget, IDP, annual reports, etc. are written in English which makes it difficult for some of the ward committees to understand. The council meetings and consultative meetings on IDP are also facilitated in English rather than in all languages that can be understood by everyone.

## **4.6. CONCLUSION**

According to Van der Waldt (2007:26), citizens demand more information on how public goods are managed, and they want to know how their tax is spent. They expect better service, and they want to participate in the developmental processes and in making decisions that will affect them. Citizens furthermore progressively demand more interaction with their local government, accuracy of information, reduced processing times, less duplication of work, access to municipal structures, increased transparency and greater access to public goods. Therefore, Matlosana Local Municipality, based on the analysis above, still have to improve on the ward committee system in order to achieve these

objectives. Although the municipality seems to be doing well in terms of the ward committee system; a lot still needs to be done in order to ensure that the ward committees are effective to enhance participatory democracy. The above mentioned challenges can be addressed and a system can be put in place in order to ensure that the ward committee system function effectively.

The next chapter of the study will focus on possible solutions to address the challenges that are affecting the effectiveness of the ward committee. The study will give suggestions and recommendations to the municipality of Matlosana in order to make the ward committees more effective to enhance participatory democracy.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Summary**

Participation of the community in the affairs of the municipality according to what the law requires is not a one - time event such as a public hearing. It is an on-going process that must be well planned, well timed, competently staffed and has sufficient resources. It is effective when each participant and not only government clearly understands his or her own position and interest but also listen to understand those of others. It is a process that creates an opportunity for participants to share their ideas, facts, experiences, knowledge, hopes, preferences, fears, opinions and values. The ward participatory system of municipal government allows for the establishment of the ward committees in order to facilitate such community participation hence their effectiveness is essential. However ward committees have achieved limited success, even where they were officially reported to be active some were malfunctioning on the ground. Numerous studies have shown that the ward committees have been faced with challenges and that made them not to be effective. Some municipalities are not taking ward committees seriously and in other areas they don't exist at all. The study therefore, focused on the effectiveness of the ward committees to enhance participatory democracy. The objective of the study was to establish whether Matlosana Local Municipality have created an environment for active participation through the ward committees and further to look at their effectiveness.

Following discussion on theoretical views on public participation, a relationship between democracy and public participation was considered. In chapter 2 of this study, Hudson's typology of democracy was highlighted to explain this relationship. The study further explained the seven core values of participation and eight levels of participation arranged in the form of a ladder by the International Association for Public Participation. The legislative framework in relation to public participation including the ward committee system was also highlighted.

The understanding of local government changed dramatically since 1994. One such change has been a move towards local governance and participatory democracy. Chapter 7 of the Constitution of South Africa 1996 mandates municipalities to involve communities and community organisations in matters of local government. The White Paper on Local

Government of 1998 holds public participation as a central theme. It further requires active participation of citizens at four levels, as: voters, participants in the policy process, consumers and service-users and partners in resource mobilisation. Chapter 4 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 requires the establishment of the ward committees by the municipalities and further provides a framework for the powers and functions of the ward committees, a procedure for dealing with vacancies, a ruling on remuneration and procedures for dissolution ward committees.

Chapter 4 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, on the other hand, requires the municipalities to develop a culture of municipal governance that works hand-in-hand with formal representative government with a system of participatory governance. The Act further requires the municipalities to involve the local communities in the performance management system of the municipality as highlighted in chapter 2 of this study. The Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 outlines ways in which the community can be informed of the financial situation of a municipality. At the National Conference on Ward Committees in 2003 the Minister for Provincial and Local Government presented draft guidelines for the operation and establishment of the ward committees. These guidelines were published in the *Government Gazette* on 24 October 2003. However, national guidelines cannot compel municipalities on how ward committees can be run as municipalities are independent organs of state. Municipalities should take the roles and responsibilities of the ward committees more seriously and provide for their role innovatively within the specific municipal context. From all mentioned pieces of legislation it is clear that South African government is taking public participation more seriously and what is critical is the implementation thereof. Matlosana Local Municipality must ensure that it complies with all that is required in order to practice a system of participatory democracy effectively.

In relation to the roles and responsibilities of the ward committees, it was stated that the primary role of the ward committees is to be a formal communication channel between the community and the council. In a nutshell, the ward committees should participate, communicate and mobilise. The role and functions of the ward committees as stipulated in the Ward Committee Resource Book: Making Ward Committees function of 2005, is very clear and Matlosana Local Municipality must clearly state all its delegated powers and

functions of the ward committees. The ward committees also have an important part to play in the core business of the municipality such as, Integrated Development Planning, Budgeting and Municipal Performance Management processes. Hence, the study argued whether the ward committees have the capacity and resources required to perform their functions effectively. The study therefore, measured the ward committees in Matlosana Local Municipality accordingly in terms of their effectiveness and findings proved that the ward committees are still faced with a number of challenges that affects their effectiveness.

Findings of the study have shown that challenges that affect the effectiveness of the ward committees range from limitations in terms of level of education, skills and expertise, lack of support from municipal officials, lack of access to resources such as office space, computers, internet ,telephones, etc. Other challenges include lack of municipal policies and procedures in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the ward committees, communication channels, support by the municipality and the ward committee meetings. The study has further shown that the ward committees in Matlosana experience minimal participation in the budget and performance management processes of the municipality. In addressing those challenges, the study suggests the following recommendations.

## **5.2RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the results of the study, the following recommendations in respect of the effectiveness of the ward committees in enhancing participatory democracy are made:

### **5.2.1 Council**

The council should be more committed in ensuring that the ward committee system is effective in Matlosana. The study established that the council of Matlosana Local Municipality does not have a clear policy on how the ward committee must operate; it is therefore recommended that council must have a clear policy in that aspect. Councillors as members of council are the decision makers. As politicians they take decisions but they do not actually deliver services to the people because that is the role of the municipal officials in the administrative departments of the council. Therefore, councillors as policy and decision makers must ensure that there is a policy regarding the functionality of the ward

committees. Van der Waldt (2007:24) also stated that municipalities should furthermore invest adequate political commitment and resources to build a legal, policy and institutional framework and develop appropriate mechanism to engage citizens in policy making. Inadequate measures for information, consultation and active participation in policy making could seriously undermine municipal community relations. It is therefore recommended that policy must include clear guidelines on the following based on all pieces of legislation regulating participatory democracy:

- establishment of the ward committees, term of office and filling of vacancies
- roles and responsibilities of the ward committee
- funding of ward committees
- allocation of resources such as office space and its equipment
- flow of communication and ways of reporting
- Mechanisms for consultation and information sharing
- procedures for dissolution of the ward committees.

From the above mentioned discussion, it must be noted that compliance is essential. The municipality must therefore comply with what its policy requires. In chapter 2 of the study, relevant legislation was outlined and the study further suggests that the municipality must comply with such legislation. The council must develop a culture of public participation by establishing a system and appropriate processes for compliance with such legislation.

### **5.2.2 Councillors**

The role of the councillors in the ward committee is not only to chair the meeting, but also to channel inputs from the ward committees to council. Councillors must have a strong commitment in ensuring that the inputs and resolutions of the ward committee are properly processed so that they can be debated in council and resolutions taken. Councillors must also ensure that feedback is given during the ward committee and community meetings. As Reddy and Sikhakane (2008:682) stated that ward councillor is responsible *inter alia* for recordkeeping; the efficient and effective use of available resources, ensuring that all statutory regulations are complied with; ensuring decisions are formalised and submitted to the Speaker for presentation to council; reporting a view point adopted that may be different from his/her own; producing a progress report to the Speaker for a performance

review with a view to corrective action; and effective and efficient performance of the committee.

The study therefore suggests that councillors must be given the necessary skills, motivation and enthusiasm to make the ward committees work effectively. Councillors must also be empowered in order to have a clear understanding of all pieces of legislation on community participation, because the role of a councillor especially ward councillor, in public participation is very critical. Councillors are playing an oversight role to ensure that the municipal officials deliver services. Therefore councillors must be committed to their oversight role to ensure that the inputs made by the ward committees are considered and addressed.

### **5.2.3 Municipal officials**

The ward committees cannot function effectively without administrative support from the municipal officials. Although the municipal officials assist the ward committees with stationery it is necessary that they must be part of their meetings and also community meetings. The study suggests that the municipal officials must attend the ward committee meetings to give the necessary administrative support. They must also arrange the venue that is central and convenient for the meetings including all the logistics. The needs and challenges of the ward committee must be attended to by the municipal officials and they must be people spirited in order to respond to community issues with dedication and commitment.

The study supports the view of Reddy and Sikhanani (2008:695) that officials who are not performing as required by the law should be disciplined and that all employees should receive training on their legislative mandate relative to service delivery including their code of conduct and work ethics. Section 195 of the Constitution of South Africa 1996 clearly outlines the ethical conduct expected from the municipal officials. The performance management system currently used for directors and senior managers should be elevated to all employees so that they can be involved in implementation, monitoring and evaluation and that will also improve the accountability of municipal officials.

Consultation is very important in this aspect as a municipality is required by legislation to consult the community in developing service standards and setting objectives and targets.

#### **5.2.4 Ward Committees**

Ward committees should be independent structures rooted in the community. They should be democratically elected to represent the community but not individuals or a certain political party. The ward committees should not be used as extensions of political parties, and they should not be subject to the control or manipulation of councillors. Therefore the study recommends that there should be clear lines of responsibility and accountability between ward committees, ward councillors and the municipality. After the establishment of the ward committees the study suggests that the municipality should develop an awareness campaign that will popularise them to members of the community. All residents must be aware of their ward committee structures in their respective wards. Council must make efforts to ensure that the ward committees are known in their wards.

#### **5.2.5 Funding for the Ward Committees**

The study have established that although the ward committees receive a stipend of R500.00 from the municipality such an amount is probably not sufficient and does not consider practicalities such as distance (to meeting venues, etc.). The ward committees must be paid the costs they incurred on transport, food and telephone charges. In respect of transport they must be given incentives according to the distance they travel. To cite an example, a ward committee member staying in Klerksdorp cannot be paid the same transport costs as the one in Hartebeesfontein. The study suggests that council must have a clear funding model for the ward committees and it must be adopted by the council. The funds must be adequately allocated to cover all the needs and activities of the ward committees so that they must be effective. There is a need for all the departments of the municipality to budget for community participation as public participation cuts across all aspects of the municipality.

### **5.2.6 Office space for the Ward Committees**

The council must ensure that all the ward committees are provided with offices where they can be able to operate. Those offices must be well furnished with office furniture, computer with internet connections and a printer including a telephone that has a direct line with municipal offices only. Municipal officials can be allocated to those offices in order to give administrative support to the ward committees.

### **5.2.7 Ward Committee meetings**

The study suggests that there must be a standard procedure for all the meetings of the ward committees. Council must adopt the proceedings for the meetings of the ward committees.

The Office of the Speaker must ensure at all times that the ward committee meetings are being called by the ward councillors as the chairperson of the committee. A standard agenda must be given to all committee members by the councillors through the Office of the Speaker. This will minimise the manipulation by councillors of discussing only issues where they have interests or pursuing their political agendas. Records of invitations, attendance registers and minutes must be kept in the Office of the Speaker at all times. Attendance of ward committee meetings by members must be regulated in order to curb and address poor attendance. The Office of the Speaker must at all times ensure that the ward committee meetings are being held regularly.

### **5.2.8 Participation of the Ward Committee on the IDP and in the Municipal Budget**

The IDP processes of Matlosana are functioning good as it was evident that the ward committee members participated in IDP Representative Forums, IDP reviews and the budget. However, the study established that there is poor attendance of ward committee and community members therefore the municipality must develop a strategy on how attendance can be improved. In some instances timing is also a contributory factor. The study also established that most IDP and Budget meetings are being held during working hours and that is the time where members of the ward committee and community are at work. The municipality must convene the meetings on a convenient time for the participants and not the facilitators. The study further suggests that both IDP and budget related documents must be developed in a simplified and summarised way. These documents must

be written in the languages that can be understood by the public. They must at all times be placed on the municipal website to be accessed by the community.

### **5.2.9 Capacity building for the Ward Committees**

The role that the members of the ward committees play requires knowledge of government laws and issues so that they can make meaningful contributions. The study established that some of the ward committee members found it difficult to contribute in the discussions especially when presentations from the municipality are too technical. Low levels of education amongst other members of ward committees require them to be more and properly capacitated.

The training programs must not be too technical and complex but it must be simple and easy to understand. The ward committees can function effectively if being given the necessary skills they require. Therefore, the study suggest that the municipality must have a clear induction programme for the ward committees and thereafter a skills audit and plan for the ward committees must be done in order to develop a capacity building programme according to the needs of the ward committees. All training and skills audit can be arranged by the skills development facilitator of the municipality.

### **5.2.10 Accountability**

Local government should be accountable to its electorates. Municipalities must ensure that it becomes responsive, responsible and accountable to the residents. The study recommends that there must be systems and procedures in place where ward committees can be guided on how to respond and account to the community as representatives of the community.

The study further established that there is little accountability because residents are not empowered on how to hold the municipality accountable. Therefore, capacity building must not only be for the ward committees and councillors but citizens also must be empowered on how to hold the municipality accountable.

### 5.2.11 Access to information

The primary function of ward committees as mentioned in chapter 3 of this mini dissertation is to be a formal communication channel between the community and the council. The municipality must therefore have clear communication guidelines as to how is it going to communicate with the ward committees in receiving the needs of the community and providing responses and information to the ward committee. It was established that the municipality lacks a communication strategy, and the study therefore suggests that the municipality must have communication strategy in place to support the ward committees. This will enable the ward committees to follow communication channels guided by the strategy in interacting with the community and the council. The ward committees will be able to receive accurate and reliable information on how the municipality is functioning including all programmes and projects of the municipality through communication channels as set out in communication strategy of the municipality. The information must be disseminated in a transparent manner.

Ababio (2004:286) points out that community participation can only be possible if the community is provided with timely, accessible and accurate information. A poorly informed community cannot obtain high level of genuine community participation.

The study further suggests that the use of information technology is essential for information sharing. Van der Waldt (2007:43-44) also stated that e-democracy can bring greater and more active participation enabled by the Internet, mobile communication and other technologies. It can also bring about a different role for government and more participatory forms of direct citizen involvement in efforts to address public challenges.

He further outlined the following suggestions for municipalities to make use of information technology for local democracy:

“They should establish a website or portal for the municipality

Open council meetings notices, with agendas and appropriate documentation, should be posted on-line

Councils should make proposed legislation, policies and regulations available online

They should make lists of all councillors and other senior officials with their e-mail contact details available online

Council should make adequate funding available to further develop ICT infrastructure that will ultimately make it possible for citizens to be notified via e-mail about new municipal decisions and information based on their interests and where they live

They should develop e-democracy structures to facilitate citizen participation (and also to make online voting possible)".

The study supports the above mentioned suggestions and encourages the municipality to utilise information technology as it will serve as a one-stop centre where services will be provided, accountability and transparency will be increased and citizen trust will be improved.

It was evident that the municipality is using other communication methods such as local newspapers, national newspapers, local and other national radios to communicate with the community. However, the study suggests that the municipality can utilise newsletters for notices and invitations as a way of communication as it can be distributed easily with a utility bill.

### **5.3. CONCLUSION**

The Constitution of South Africa, 1996 outlines clearly the core functions of local government and one of these functions is to encourage community to participation. Municipalities as a sphere of government closest to the people must have capacity for deliberations of key issues that affects the community. It should further have the capacity to enable public, private and non-government organisations to combine all their resources and skills to achieve a common objective because alone it will not be possible to implement the constitutional mandate of community participation. It is through local government that government can meet the needs and aspirations of the community, provide services where they are needed, and also address basic national challenges such poverty, unemployment and poor socio-economic development. The ward committee system therefore plays a meaningful role to achieve that.

The ward committee as a representative structure of the community needs to bridge the gap between the municipality and the community by facilitating proper communication. They link and inform the municipalities about the needs, aspirations and potentials and problems of the community. It is therefore necessary for them to participate fully in the IDP, Budget and Performance Management System of the municipality. The major concern however is the challenges that the ward committees are faced with. The study concludes that these challenges can be addressed as there are laws and regulations which are a guiding tool for making the system effective and efficient. The importance of the ward committees as a representative structure of the community must never be underestimated by the municipalities. The municipal officials must be given thorough training on how the system works and the good relationship between councillors and community must always be maintained, it should not be only towards or during local elections.

As highlighted in the study, municipalities must conduct its core functions in an open and transparent manner. Implementation of Batho Pele principles enhances community participation. Municipal councillors and officials must treat people with honesty, dignity and respect and the necessary support should always be given to the ward committees. Such an approach will contribute to enhancing participatory democracy.

It should be noted that the main objective of the ward committees is to enhance the involvement and participation of the communities in the affairs of the municipality. Attention must therefore be given to the establishment of communication strategies that will enhance effective communication between council, the ward committees and the communities. The ward committees must also have an independent voice and must not be influenced by any political agendas when executing this important task. However, the fact that ward councillors are chairpersons of the ward committee poses a threat to the ward committee as an independent structure. The composition of the ward committee needs to be reviewed so that the structure can function independently and represent the interests of the broader community effectively.

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## ANNEXURE: A

### QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED BY ALL RESPONDENTS

#### INSTRUCTION

The study is strictly for academic purposes only

No identity is needed

Information will be treated with strict confidentiality and anonymity

Respondents are requested to answer questions with total honesty and objectivity

*(Please tick with an **x** in the box of your choice)*

#### SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

##### 1 GENDER

Male	Female
------	--------

##### 2 AGE

18-25	25-35	35-45	50-above
-------	-------	-------	----------

##### 3 AREA OF LOCATION

Town	Township	Farm
------	----------	------

##### 4 RESPONSIBILITY IN COUNCIL

Ward councillor	PR-Councillor	Ward committee	Official of council
-----------------	---------------	----------------	---------------------

##### 5 YEARS SERVED IN CAPACITY AS REFERRED TO IN QUESTION 4

1-3 YRS	4-5 YRS	6-10 YRS	
---------	---------	----------	--

## ANNEXURE: B

### QUESTIONS FOR WARD COMMITTEES

#### SECTION B: WARD COMMITTEE

**N.B.** (To be answered only by **ward committees**)

1 How did you become a ward committee member? Is it thorough?

Election	nomination	Appointment
----------	------------	-------------

2 How often are ward committee meetings held in the ward you serve?

weekly	monthly	quarterly	never
--------	---------	-----------	-------

3 Minutes of the ward committee are recorded and submitted to the Office of the Speaker

Always	often	sometimes	never
--------	-------	-----------	-------

5 Does the ward committee have a schedule of meetings?

yes	No
-----	----

6 Does the ward committee have a ward profile (information about the ward e.g unemployment rate, youth, pensioners, government, infrastructure, number of indigent households etc.?)

yes	no
-----	----

7 How do you rate the attendance of the ward committee members in ward committee meetings?

Good	Fair	poor
------	------	------

8 How often are ward community meetings being held in a ward?

Monthly	Quarterly	never
---------	-----------	-------

9. Which communication tools is the ward committee using to communicate with the community?

Public Meeting	Door to Door	Flyers or Pamphlets	No communication
----------------	--------------	---------------------	------------------

10. In which venue are ward committee meetings being held?

Council building	School	Community hall
------------------	--------	----------------

11 .Are you a member of the IDP (Integrated Development Planning) representative forum?

Yes	No
-----	----

12 Are you participating during IDP (Integrated Development Planning) processes?

Yes	No
-----	----

13 Do you understand the budget of the municipality?

Yes	No
-----	----

14 How many council meetings have you attended since January 2010?

Never	Less than 5 meetings	More than 5 meetings	More than 10 meetings
-------	----------------------	----------------------	-----------------------

15 Have you ever attended a workshop or training on policies or by-laws of the municipality?

Yes	No
-----	----

16 Any other comment

.....

.....

.....

## ANNEXURE C

### QUESTIONS FOR WARD COUNCILLORS

#### SECTION C: WARD COUNCILLORS

**N.B.** (To be answered only by **ward councillors**)

1 Ward committees are committed to their work.

All of them	Some of them	Not at all
-------------	--------------	------------

2 How is the attendance of ward committees at ward committee meetings?

Good	Fair	Poor
------	------	------

3 Is the municipality supporting the ward committees with resources such as stationery, office space, publications of meetings, catering of meetings etc.?

Yes	No
-----	----

4 How do you rate the contribution of ward committees during IDP (Integrated Development Planning) processes?

Good	Fair	Poor
------	------	------

5 How do you rate the participation of ward committee at budgetary processes?

Good	Fair	Poor
------	------	------

6 Do you discuss the budget of the municipality during ward committee meeting?

Yes	No
-----	----

7 Are ward committees effective in mobilising community for participation in municipal affairs?

Yes	No
-----	----

8 How much is the stipend for ward committees?

R0,00-R99	R100-R499	R500+
-----------	-----------	-------

9 Do the officials of council respond on time on issues raised by the ward committee?

always	sometimes	never
--------	-----------	-------

10 How do you rate the relationship between councillors and ward committees?

Good	Fair	Poor
------	------	------

11 Does the ward committee receive a regular performance report from the municipality?

Yes	No
-----	----

12 Was there any training conducted for ward committees?

Yes	No
-----	----

13 Do the ward committee members understand their roles and responsibility in terms of community participation?

Yes	No	Unsure
-----	----	--------

14 Is there any conflict of roles between ward committee members and councillor?

Yes	No
-----	----

15 Is the community of Matlosana aware of the ward committee as a structure, its roles and operations?

Yes	No
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16 Any other comment

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.....

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## ANNEXURE: D

### QUESTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

#### SECTION D: MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

**N.B.** (To be answered only by **Municipal officials**)

1 Has the municipality established a ward committee for each ward?

Yes	No
-----	----

2 Does the municipality have rules in respect to the election procedures for ward committee members?

Yes	No
-----	----

3 Is there a budget for the operation of the ward committees?

Yes	No
-----	----

4 Is there a unit that deals specifically with public participation?

Yes	No
-----	----

5 Is the report and concerns of ward committee discussed at the level of council?

Yes	No
-----	----

6 Is there an institutionalised procedure for participation of ward committees into the IDP (Integrated Development Plan) processes?

Yes	No
-----	----

7 Are there mechanisms in place to ensure that ward committees complement and support other structures of community participation such as CDW (Community Development Workers)?

Yes	No
-----	----

8 Is there a policy or by-laws of the municipality that regulate the powers, functions and operation of ward committee?

Yes	No
-----	----

9 How do you rate the performance of ward committees in disseminating information from the municipality to the community?

Good	Fair	Poor
------	------	------

10 According to the minutes of the ward committee is there an indication that key issues such as water, electricity, roads and projects are discussed in their meeting?

Yes	No
-----	----

11 Does the policy stipulate a procedure for reports from ward committees to the municipality?

Yes	No
-----	----

12 Are ward committee members receiving adequate training on their roles and responsibilities?

Yes	No
-----	----

13 Does the municipality have a communication strategy to support ward committees in enhancing public participation?

Yes	No
-----	----

14 Do ward committee members consult adequately with communities they represent?

Yes	No
-----	----

