SERVICE DELIVERY: AN ELECTION ISSUE?

Piercing the Promises: Election Accountability Pack
Service Delivery: An Election Issue?

The South African Constitution states that municipalities have the responsibility to make sure that all citizens are provided with services to satisfy their basic needs.

These include:

- Water supply
- Sewage collection and disposal
- Refuse removal
- Electricity and gas supply
- Municipal health services
- Municipal roads and storm water drainage
- Street lighting
- Municipal parks and recreation

How’s the government doing?

Free Basic Municipal Services = 6,000 litres of water and 50kWh of electricity a month, while policies regulating the provision of basic sanitation and refuse removal have yet to be finalised.

(http://info.gov.za)

People have been voicing their discontent!

The number of public service protests in 2009 and 2010 was more than triple the number of protests in any other year since 2004

1. Broke, corrupt and short on skills – how are you going to fix local government’s greatest ills?

The “State of local government in South Africa” (2009) report published by the Department for Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs confirms that local government municipalities are in a dire state when it comes to providing basic services. According to the report the reasons for this include: high levels of corruption, poor financial management, and insufficient capacity due to a scarcity of skills. How does your party plan to address these obstacles which continue to hinder local government in delivering basic services?

2. Accountability is key! How will you prove you’ll keep your political promises?

What monitoring and evaluation tools will your party put in place to make sure that service delivery deadlines are met, and if not, that local councillors can be held accountable. How do you plan to regularly communicate these to communities, and allow for verification by voters of the findings of the monitoring and evaluation processes?

3. Ignoring the electorate – how will you make sure local government listens?

Wide spread protests at local levels indicate that citizens feel that their demands are not being listened to. Protests generally follow frustrated attempts at structured engagement. Community participation groups aimed at engaging with local government have not proved particularly effective in delivering accountability and services, especially in under-performing municipalities, leading to this increase in the number of ‘service delivery' protests. What mechanisms will your party put in place to make sure that there is effective communication between councillors and the citizens they represent? How will your party hear the voices of any or all constituents with a concern, and not just those of a select few? The current system doesn’t work because voters feel they have no voice, or at least that councillors can choose not to listen. How will your party fix that?
4. How will you deal with protests about municipality performance on service delivery?

Citizens are entitled to protest peacefully to bring their concerns to their government’s attention. While some of the protests of the last seven years have not been peaceful, they have all been about citizens telling those with political power what they think. If elected, how would you deal with local protests? Would you listen to and negotiate with the protesters, and if so, how will you go about doing that?

5. In-fighting and political point scoring are distractions – can you play nice and get the job done?

Intra-party and inter-political party conflict in local government has continued to shift the focus away from service delivery and the effective implementation of poverty eradication policies. Will your party commit to putting political squabbling aside in the interests of the electorate and how could you ensure that such a commitment would be upheld?

6. How will your party give more power to the people?

Has your party got a plan to make local government more democratic, and if so, what is it? Possibilities include:

- ensuring ward committees are directly elected so that they are accountable to voters;
- ensuring a right to recall a councilor or mayor if most voters in an area want this;
- directly electing mayors;
- introducing a second tier to local councils which would be closer to voters (similar to elected ward committees)

What’s your view on these suggestions and have you got ideas or plans of your own?
7. No more secrets, no more lies – what are your plans for transparency?

What will your party do to improve transparency, and facilitate voters, civil society and media in overseeing and measuring whether political promises are kept, targets are met, and problems are adequately and swiftly resolved? What are you doing to ensure voters know what your plans and policies are, so that they can make an informed decision in the ballot box? Are you speaking out to voters in their own languages, and how are you reaching voters who can’t read? If elected will you keep the voting public informed about your progress after polling day?

8. Free Basic Municipal Services – is everyone getting what they’re entitled to and are you reaching enough people?

6,000 litres of water and 50kWh of electricity a month, while policies regulating the provision of basic sanitation and refuse removal have yet to be finalized – these are the Free Basic Municipal Services currently available. Is this good enough and are all your constituents who are entitled to these services receiving them? What specific programmes does your party plan to roll out at a local level to assist with addressing poverty within the powers of local government? How do you plan to use the Integrated Development Plan process to stimulate and diversify local economic development?

9. You promise you’ll make things better but what will have you the power to change?

Do you know what competencies are the exclusive domain of local government? Which are these, and which are shared competencies? Does your party plan to communicate these different political responsibilities to people more effectively, so that people are fully aware of where responsibility really lies? How do you plan to do this?
10. What are your plans for job creation and supports of SMMEs in your area?

Local economic development has been identified as being central to creating employment opportunities at a local level. However, funding for Small, Micro and Media-sized Enterprises (SMMEs) has been centralised to the Industrial Development Corporation and Khula Enterprise Finance Ltd. What will your party do to bring make access to funding for SMMEs easier at a local level?

11. What's your area's biggest problem and what's your solution?

What do you believe is the most pressing issue facing your municipality and what do you plan to do about it?