

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

All municipalities consist of:

- **A municipal council**

The municipal council consists of politicians who are democratically elected by local residents. The council is responsible for governing the local area.

- **A municipal administration**

The administration is the organization that delivers municipal services to local residents. It consists of **officials** who are employed by the municipal council. The head of the administration, or the manager of the organization, is called the **Municipal Manager** (previously called the CEO).

Municipal councils are central to local democracy. Although there are many leaders and influential people in local communities, the municipal council is the only structure elected by the whole local community. It is meant to represent the collective interests and provide leadership to the whole community.

As providers of developmental local government, every municipal council has a wide range of responsibilities:

- Municipal councils must **ensure the provision of services** to local communities. To deliver these services, the municipality must hire staff and pay for things like water pipes and streetlights. If the municipality does not have adequate income, it will not be able to afford to continue to provide services. Municipalities therefore need financial and management systems to collect income from rates, tax and service charges. These systems will ensure that service delivery is sustainable.
- Municipal councils must also **promote the social and economic development of their local communities**. Municipalities are responsible for services that aim to make our cities, towns and rural areas prosperous and healthy places to live and work in. For example, municipalities must develop plans for their local areas to ensure that residential homes are close to schools, clinics and shops. Municipal planning can also enhance the economic potential of an area. For example, through ensuring that there is transport for people to travel from home to work. Municipalities can also develop programmes to support the economic growth of the local area, such as small business development programmes.
- Most importantly, municipal councils are responsible for **governing the local area in a way that is democratic and accountable to the local communities** that elected them. Municipal councils take important decisions on behalf of the communities they represent. For example, they must decide which services are most urgently needed and where to allocate limited resources. Each municipal council must ensure that the decisions it takes aim to meet the needs of the local community, and benefit the local area. It must also account to local residents for the decisions that it takes, and for the way in which it spends public funds. Municipal councils should ensure that local residents have a say in the decisions they take. They should encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the governance of the local area.