



[Insert Picture]

## Table of Contents

1.0 About this Booklet .....	1
2.0 Councils and their Purpose .....	1
2.1 The Make-up of Council.....	2
3.0 How a Council makes Decisions .....	2
3.1 What is Full Council.....	2
3.2 What is a Council Committee .....	2
3.3 The Job of a Councillor .....	2
3.4 Councillor Qualifications.....	3
3.5 Me and My Councillor .....	3
4.0 How Council Delivers Services .....	3
4.3 More on Your Responsibilities .....	3
5.0 Appreciating the Role of the Ministry/Minister .....	4
6.0 Conclusion.....	4

### 1.0 ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

The Government of Zimbabwe desires that everyone residing in or visiting any part of Zimbabwe has the best experience in terms of the services Councils offer. That experience can be built on the efforts of Councils and residents. This is why the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing produced this Booklet so that residents of any Zimbabwean Urban Local Authority understand their Councils. The Booklet defines what residents can expect from Councils and what is expected of them. It thus guides both in jointly building good urban governance and management.

### 2.0 COUNCILS AND THEIR PURPOSE

The Constitution of Zimbabwe (Section 5) defines three tiers of Government and one of

these is Local Authorities or Councils. Zimbabweans have a right to participate in their governance at all these levels. They do this by electing representatives and through directly taking part in democratic spaces or structures established for decision making.

As a tier of Government, Local Authorities have an important role in Zimbabwe’s democracy and development. Local Authorities are the easiest for citizens to reach and get services from. The Government has set up Councils so that the people can join in decision making processes in the areas where they live. Government and Councils work together to bring services and development to all residents. The Government gives power to Local Authorities so that they can do what needs to be done.

Urban Local Authorities are established through a Presidential Proclamation. The Proclamation gives the name of the Local Authority, its powers and functions and the area where it operates.

Some of the functions you can expect from your Council are:

1. Urban planning and development control;
2. Provision of clean and safe water;
3. Collection of rubbish;
4. Sewerage services;
5. Environmental management and control;
6. Providing access roads;
7. Provide public lighting;
8. Emergency services e.g. ambulance and fire services;
9. Providing health care services;
10. Primary and Secondary Schools;
11. Social and recreational facilities;
12. Cemeteries and crematoriums;
13. Local Economic Development; and
14. Licensing of premises.

The services that Councils provide are listed in Acts and policies. Council uses national policies to create their own policies, by-laws, plans and programmes. As a resident, you have the right to ask your Council to explain the powers and functions to you.

## 2.1 THE MAKE-UP OF COUNCIL

All Urban Local Authorities have two sets of players. These are the policy makers who are your elected Councillors and the policy implementers who are your Council staff.

**The policy makers** are elected in General or By Elections by the registered voters of the Council wards. Where a Council is too small in terms of population to have wards or where there are no councillors, the Minister appoints Caretakers to act as Councillors until an election is held.

Councils employ their own staff to perform the Councils' powers and functions. Staff are the people at your Council every day making sure that everything is working the way it should.

## 3.0 HOW A COUNCIL MAKES DECISIONS

No single person can make a Council decision: these are made together after Councillors and staff discuss them carefully in an open manner. Councils make decisions that fall into two categories. One is Policy and the other is Administrative. Policy decisions are made by Council (the body of all Councillors for a Local Authority) while Administrative decisions are made by the staff who are called the Executive.

Your Councillor may bring any subject to Council through a document called a Motion. This Motion is sent to a Council Committee for discussion, and then the Committee makes a recommendation to Full Council. The Full Council then looks at the matter and if it agrees with the Committee's recommendations Council makes a resolution. A resolution is a Council decision that the Executive must implement.

As a resident you can influence both types of decisions. You influence policy decisions by lobbying your Councillor. You influence administrative decisions by talk to your Town Clerk/Secretary or by lodging a complaint.

## 3.1 WHAT IS FULL COUNCIL

Full Council is the body where all Councillors are present and reports are given from all the Committees. This is the meeting where Council decisions/resolutions are made. Residents are allowed to attend Full Council meetings to witness how decisions are reached but are not allowed to speak at the Council meeting. Council is required to meet monthly. Special

meetings can be held where urgent issues need to be discussed before the next Council.

The Mayor or Chairperson who is elected by Councillors at the beginning of the term of office is in control of Full Council Meetings. Every Council also has a Deputy Mayor or Chairperson who acts as Council Chair when the Mayor/Chairperson is not there.

## 3.2 WHAT IS A COUNCIL COMMITTEE

A Committee is a group of Councillors who are given specific responsibility by Council. At its first Council decides which Councillors will serve on the different Committees that the Council has. When the Committee first its first meeting it will choose a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson for itself. The Council gives the functions to Committee. When a Committee meets it will deal with all Motions that have come in to that meeting. The Motions will be discussed and Council staff will give the Committee technical advice. The Committee then looks at the information and analysis to come up with a recommendation.

The Committee also receives regular reports from Council staff. This helps them to know what is happening in Council. Sometimes Committees will make a recommendation based on a staff report.

Every Council must have a Finance Committee, a Health and Housing Committee, an Environmental Management Committee and an Audit Committee. The Council can set up any other Committees it needs to operate well. Most Local Authorities have a Works and Planning Committee and a Human Resources Committee. Councils can set up short term Committees got specific issues. These disband when that task is complete.

## 3.3 THE JOB OF A COUNCILLOR

Being a Councillor is not a full time job. A Councillor is a civic-minded person elected to represent their ward based on a desire to serve those they live with in improving their settlement. Alone and working with other Councillors, a Councillor is supposed to:

1. Bring your issues to Council and be generally concerned for your welfare;
2. Speaking on your behalf during Committee and Council debates;
3. Reporting back to you on issues submitted and giving them updates on Council activities in general; and

4. Helping to make policies for the whole Council area which includes your ward.

When a Councillor is doing his/her job they have to be able to bring issues acceptable to all Councillors and must be legal. This means that sometimes you may not get everything that you demand from your Councillor. As a resident you should not force your Councillor to make promises he/she is not able to meet.

When Councillors are doing their work they are supposed to work for your benefit not for theirs. If Councillors have personal issues in Council they are required to 'declare their interests'. When this happens the Councillor is not allowed to take part in the discussion on the issue.

### 3.4 COUNCILLOR QUALIFICATIONS

The law does not require a Councillor to have any educational qualifications. The Electoral Act provides that to be eligible for election as a Councillor a person has to be a Zimbabwean, 21 years or older and on the Voters Roll for the Council **Area concerned**. What is really required of a Councillor is the ability to listen to what people want and then negotiate with other Councillors in the Council to address issues from their ward and to benefit the urban area as a whole. An ideal Councillor is empathetic, approachable, with good communication skills, transparent, accountable and committed to their ward.

### 3.5 ME AND MY COUNCILLOR

You should know and be in regular contact with your Councillor. You can ask your Town Clerk or Town Secretary for information on your Councillor's name and contact. Once you know these then you need to find your Councillor and start taking part in ward activities. You can also talk to your Councillor one to one so that he/she knows your opinions.

### 4.0 HOW COUNCIL DELIVERS SERVICES

Council uses its powers to deliver services it is required to deliver using a system of "cost recovery". This means that the person who uses the services has to pay for it. The Council decides the costs of the services and then the resident who uses the service pays for it. The cost of the service will also cover the costs of Council staff, equipment or machinery and materials needed to deliver services.

### The Cost of Services

All charges that Council levies are part of a Budget. A Council budget is the Financial Plan for the year. As a resident you have the right you have the right to be involved in the budgeting process. If you attend a Budget meeting in your ward you will be able to ask how Council sets the cost of services. You can give you opinion of this. It is always easier to pay for a service if you know what it takes to deliver it. You need to be on the lookout for your ward budget consultation meetings. These usually take place in the months of August and September. If you miss these meetings you will have to wait for the following year.

### Me and My Services

Council delivers services for the benefit of its residents. Because the services are for your benefit you should also have a say in service provision. There are number of ways you can do this. You can get information on types of services, cost of services and availability of services from your Council offices or at ward meetings. Some Councils have Notice Boards, Magazines, What's App and SMS Groups where information is provided. It is important to know what your Council delivers so that you don't miss out and you don't demand what your Council is not able to offer you. Your Council may be able to offer improved services if you and other residents agree to contribute to setting up new services or improve existing ones.

Every Council has a Complaints System. You need to find out what the Complaints System is so that you can use it to make your Council services better. Sometimes Councils arrange tours of key services to help you understand the service. You can ask your Councillor to arrange this for you and your community to arrange for such a tour.

### 4.3 MORE ON YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

You have certain responsibilities in relation to your Council. These are shown below.

**Voter registration** – every person who qualifies in terms of the Electoral Act should register to vote so that they can elect their Councillor. This is their democratic right that came with a high price of the Liberation Struggle.

**Councillor Election** – every voter has a right to vote for a candidate of their choice in General and By Elections. If one does not participate in

elections then they cannot complain about the quality of the Councillor who takes office.

**Participation** – all residents should actively participate in Council activities including ward meetings and functions, reading Council notice boards for Council news, communicating issues to your Councillor, giving feedback on Council services, lodging complaints when dissatisfied with service delivery, submitting objections to budgets and borrowing powers when these are necessary, reporting faults and breakdowns of services to the Council, protecting Council property within the neighbourhood and commending Council where it does well.

**Paying for Council services** - If a resident has used a Council service this should be paid for promptly and in full. If a debt cannot be settled for any reason, it is the responsibility of the service user to visit the Council offices to explain, make or enter into and adhere to a payment plan. Residents should give priority to paying for Council services as most of them are basic services that are essential for daily life.

If services are not paid for, Council becomes unable to continue providing services and to run as an organization. Councils have the right to hand over debtors to a legal debt collection service. If this happens to you, you will have to pay for the services of a debt collector, which makes this option more expensive than a Council payment plan. Council does not want to hand over debtors to debt collectors because it spoils the relationship with its debtors. But Council has to hand over debtors because the people who don't pay for service delivery spoil it for those who do.

## 5.0 APPRECIATING THE ROLE OF THE MINISTRY/MINISTER

In order for National Government to work smoothly Cabinet Ministers are appointed and given certain Acts to administer. The Urban Councils Act has been assigned to the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing. This means that the Minister has the role of overseeing, promoting and supporting Local Authorities in service delivery. Other Ministers also oversee, promote and support Local Authorities because Councils will be delivering services that are their responsibility. For instance, the Minister of Health has a responsibility to ensure that the

operation of Council health facilities (hospitals and clinics) complies with health policies and standards. The same applies to water, roads, education and other services.

Because the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing questions in Parliament about one or more Urban Local Authorities are answered by the Minister. The Urban Councils Act also gives the Minister some powers to ensure that Councils operate within the national policies and laws. The Minister also has a responsibility to you as a citizen. Where you are unhappy with an issue in your Council you have the right to complain to your Council. If your Council does not respond to your complaints properly you can raise that same complain with your Minister.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing hopes that you find this Booklet meaningful to you. We hope that the Booklet you have read will get you more involved in your Council which was set up to provide you with the services you need. Please start talking to your Councillor, your Council or your Ministry so that together we can develop Zimbabwe.



Flier Produced by the;  
Government of Zimbabwe  
Ministry of Local Government, Public Works  
and National Housing  
Makombe Building  
Harare, Zimbabwe  
(Contact Information for relevant Ministry  
Unit).