

For Buffalo City, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) processes play a key role in aligning budgets to strategies and programmes of departments in order of priority. This process assists the municipality to acknowledge the realities and deal with the priorities. The key themes arising out of these strategic processes and informing the development of the IDP draft review (2004/05) was a focus on, service delivery, including the way existing services were delivered and maintained, with emphasis on the four focus areas of the Revitalization Plan, namely:

- a new approach to service delivery;
- expanding the resource base;
- improving effectiveness and;
- building partnerships.

A key goal of the review was to also to ensure that the Reviewed IDP (2004/05) was aligned to the Budget and the Performance Management System which was piloted with Section 57 employees, whilst all other staff from levels 7 to 3 were given an introduction to Performance Management and its requirements via training sessions scheduled by the Human Resources Department.

The capital budget also posed a challenge. The number of projects outstripped the available capital substantially and at that point in time, Council had very limited discretion in selection of projects, due to commitments, prior approvals and capital availability. The prioritization process was critical. Whilst the Spatial Development Framework guided spatial prioritization, a guideline for allocating Buffalo City's own capital funding to each other IDP theme or cluster was established.

The following consideration had to be given in the prioritization of programmes and projects. These included:

- the future impact of the programme or project on the operational budget;
- functional responsibility between spheres of government;
- operational or capital budget – shifting project into operational budget; and
- counter-funding requirements

Recognizing the tremendous challenges facing the municipality, resulted in the administration committing itself to a project designed to analyze the current processes and reduce or eliminate bottlenecks and barriers to effective and efficient performance. The project called "working smarter" comprised of the following broad deliverables.

- Conducting a climate survey.
- Conducting a skills profiling and audit.
- Business Process and Systems reengineering
- Leadership and Performance Management

Whilst improving organizational efficiency internally was important, getting to grips as to what were people's expectations and needs as well as what they thought about services they received was also vital for improving service delivery and customer care externally. To this effect the municipality engaged a service provider to conduct a Customer Satisfaction Survey. According to the results of the survey, 59% of consumers were satisfied with services they received. This meant that 41% of our consumers still needed to be satisfied. Following the survey the municipality is now looking at a Customer Care Strategy and a Services Charter. This will assist BCM to constantly add value to its services as well as look at new and innovative ways of improving service delivery in order to satisfy its customers.

Buffalo City also concentrated its efforts on a three year Medium Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework (MTREF) operating and capital budget which was prepared according to the Municipal Finance and Management Act (MFMA) and National Treasury Requirements. The MTREF budget makes provision for the indigents for free basic services as well as affordable tariffs.

Other key areas of focus included developing an HIV/Aids Cross-Cutting Strategy as well as conducting BCM Employee HIV Prevalence Study and Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey. Having a healthy work force is vital for the municipality, and future planning for employees that may be exposed to the HIV/Aids was essential.