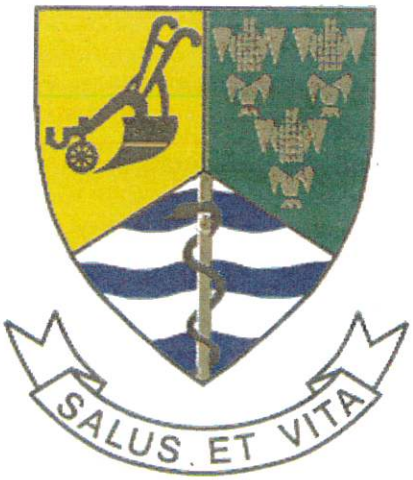
BELA-BELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES POLICY

OCTOBER 2025

POLICY NAME	**WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES POLICY (WSSP)**	
POLICY NUMBER	**TBC**	
DATE	**OCTOBER 2025**	
STATUS	**DRAFT**	
APPROVED BY	**MUNICIPAL MANAGER**	
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i. PREFACE

Access to safe and reliable water remains one of the most fundamental human rights and a cornerstone for sustainable socio-economic development. As Bela-Bela Local Municipality, our vision is to provide every household, business and institution within our jurisdiction with efficient, affordable and sustainable water and sanitation services that enhance quality of life and promote inclusive growth.

Over the years, the Municipality has faced persistent challenges in the delivery of these essential services. These include ageing infrastructure, high levels of non-revenue water (NRW), limited bulk water supply, inadequate operation and maintenance funding, and increasing incidents of theft and vandalism of municipal assets. These challenges not only disrupt service continuity but also place severe strain on municipal finances and the ability to meet growing Community demands.

The Water Services Policy responds to these challenges by providing a coherent framework for the sustainable management, regulation and protection of water and sanitation services. It defines how Bela-Bela Local Municipality, as a designated Water Services Authority (WSA), will plan, operate and maintain its systems in compliance with the Water Services Act (Act 108 of 1997), National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000).

This policy is aligned with the Municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP), Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) and Water Services Master Plan, ensuring that our long-term planning, resource allocation, and operational decisions are informed by sustainability, efficiency, and accountability.

Through this policy, the Municipality reaffirms its commitment to improving service reliability, reducing water losses, protecting infrastructure against theft and vandalism, and strengthening partnerships with Communities and Stakeholders. Together, we can ensure that every drop of water contributes to the social and economic well-being of our residents while safeguarding this vital resource for future generations.

G.M Seleka

Cllr. Gloria Modiegi Seleka
Mayor

ii. FOREWORD

Water and sanitation are essential for human dignity, public health, and economic resilience. The Bela-Bela Local Municipality Water Services Policy represents a strategic commitment to improve governance, enhance efficiency and strengthen accountability in the delivery of water and sanitation services.

This policy provides a structured and transparent framework for how the Municipality will fulfil its constitutional mandate as a Water Services Authority (WSA). It sets out clear guidelines for planning, operation, maintenance and regulation of services to ensure that every citizen benefits from equitable, reliable and safe water supply and sanitation.

The key aims of this policy are to:

- Provide a consistent governance and operational framework for the management of water and sanitation services.
- Strengthen regulatory compliance and environmental stewardship.
- Promote financial sustainability through improved water loss management; and
- Safeguard municipal infrastructure against theft, vandalism, and unlawful connections.

In responding to emerging challenges, the policy introduces innovative and technology-driven approaches, including the integration of smart metering, leak detection systems and real-time monitoring, coupled with proactive preventive maintenance programmes and Community-based reporting mechanisms.

Partnerships with key Stakeholders such as the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), Magalies Water, and the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) will be strengthened to support implementation.

Ultimately, this policy is more than a compliance instrument, but it is a strategic tool for resilience, efficiency, and sustainability. By promoting Community involvement and protecting public assets, Bela-Bela Local Municipality aims to deliver reliable, affordable, and sustainable water and sanitation services, contributing to our collective vision of a clean, developed, and resilient Municipality.

Mr. Tsatsi George Ramagaga
Municipal Manager

iii. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BBLM	Bela- Bela Local Municipality
CPA	Community Property Association
FBS	Free Basic Services
FBW	Free Basic Water
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
NDMA	National Disaster Management Act
NFSMS	National Faecal Sludge Management Strategy
NRW	Non-Revenue Water
NSP	National Sanitation Policy
NWA	National Water Act
NWPR	National Water Policy Review
SANS	The South African National Standard
SFWS	Strategic Framework for Water Services
WHO	World Health Organization
WSA	Water Services Authority
WSDP	Water Services Development Plan
WSP	Water Services Provider

iv. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

TERM	LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK	DEFINITION
"Basic Sanitation Facility"	SFWS (2003)	The infrastructure necessary to provide a sanitation service which is safe, reliable, private, protected from the weather, ventilated, keeps smells to the minimum, is easy to keep clean, minimises the risk of the spread of sanitation-related diseases by facilitating the appropriate control of disease carrying flies and pests, and enables safe and appropriate treatment and/or removal of human waste and wastewater in an environmentally sound manner.
"Basic Sanitation Service"	SFWS (2003)	The provision of a basic sanitation facility which is easily accessible to a household, the sustainable operation of the facility, including the safe removal of human waste and wastewater from the premises where this is appropriate and necessary, and the communication of good sanitation, hygiene, and related practices.
"Basic Water Services"	SFWS (2003)	A basic water supply service and/or a basic sanitation service.
"Basic Water Supply Facility"	NWPR (2016)	A basic water supply facility is defined as the infrastructure necessary to supply portable water to a formal connection at the boundary of a stand or site of a public institution (school, clinic, hospital etc.)

TERM	LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK	DEFINITION
"Basic Water Supply Service"	SFWS (2003)	The provision of a basic water supply facility, the sustainable operation of the facility (available for at least 350 days per year and not interrupted for more than 48 consecutive hours per incident) and the communication of good water-use, hygiene, and related practices.
"End-user education"	NSP (2016)	Ongoing consumer education on sanitation services right, responsibilities, facility operation and maintenances; and water conservation and demand management including reduce, reuse, recycle and recover principles.
"Faecal Sludge"	NFSMS (2023)	The contents emptied from onsite sanitation system and not transported by sewerage. It includes liquid and solid contents of onsite systems such as container-based vaults, pit latrines, septic tanks, community toilets or mobile toilets.
"Faecal Sludge Management"	NFSMS (2023).	The management of human excreta from onsite sanitation systems, excluding package plants along sanitation value chain which includes containment, collection, transportation, treatment, safe disposal, or reuse.
"Hygiene Education"	NSP (2023)	Relates to activities that aim to increase an individual's knowledge about issues relating to personal habits and practices that affect one's health, particularly in relation to water and sanitation services.

TERM	LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK	DEFINITION
		Hygiene education includes personal hygiene, water hygiene, food hygiene, human waste hygiene and environmental hygiene education to ensure appropriate sanitation practices.
"Indigent"	NSP (2016)	Indigent means —lacking the necessities of life. The definition of indigent from the National Framework for a Municipal Indigent Policy outlines sanitation as one of the necessities of life. The National Treasury definition of a 'poverty line' is also acknowledged to determine indigence.
"Interim Water and Sanitation Services"		An interim level of water and sanitation service is "a temporary water and sanitation service [which] is an interim measure and should provide, within reasonable walking distance, water of an adequate quality from a health point of view and provide sanitation measures that ensures privacy to the user, be readily accessible and in close walking distance, and provide for the safe disposal of human waste, including hygiene and end-user education while repairs and/or reconstruction of a water services failure/interruption/breakdown are in effect".
"Non-Revenue Water"		Non-revenue water (NRW) is the volume of water supplied by the water utility but for which it receives no income. NRW incorporates unbilled (metered or unmetered) authorised

TERM	LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK	DEFINITION
		consumption, apparent / commercial losses, and real / physical losses.
"Privately Owned Land"	Water and Sanitation Services Policy on Privately Owned Land (2023)	Privately Owned land is any land that is not public land or land owned, controlled, or leased by the state but is owned or under the control of a single private individual or entity or group of individuals collectively. In most cases, these properties are far away from the Municipality and its services systems. The range of contexts of privately owned land for the purpose of this policy includes, amongst others: • Commercial farms. • Mine owned land. • Church-owned land. • Industrial-owned land, including privately owned enterprises. • Game parks • Agricultural holdings • Communal Property Association (CPA) • Trust properties
"Water Services Authority"	SFWS (2003)	Any Municipality that has the executive authority to provide water services within its area of jurisdiction in terms of the Municipal Structures Act 118 of 1998 or the Ministerial authorisations made in terms of this Act.

TERM	LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK	DEFINITION
"Water Services Intermediary"	SFWS (2003) / Water Services Act (1997)	Any person who is obliged to provide water services to another in terms of a contract where the obligation to provide water services is incidental to the main object of that contract.
"Water Services Provider"	Water Services Act (1997) SFWS (2003)	Water services provider" means any person who provides water services to consumers or to another water services institution but does not include a water services intermediary. A Water Services Provider (WSP) is: • Any person who has a contract with a WATER SERVICES AUTHORITY or another WSP to sell water to, and / or accept wastewater for the purposes of treatment from, that authority or provider; and / or • Any person who has a contract with a WATER SERVICES AUTHORITY to assume operational responsibility for providing water services to one or more consumers or end users within a specific geographic area; or • A WATER SERVICES AUTHORITY that provides either or both of the above services itself.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bela-Bela Local Municipality (BBLM) is one of five Local Municipalities within the Waterberg District Municipality in the Limpopo Province. It is located on the southern part of the District and covers an area of approximately 337,605.55 hectares, representing about 6.8% of the total Waterberg District area. The Municipality shares borders with the Mpumalanga, Northwest **and** Gauteng Provinces **(refer to *Figure 1: Bela-Bela Local Municipality Locality Map*).**

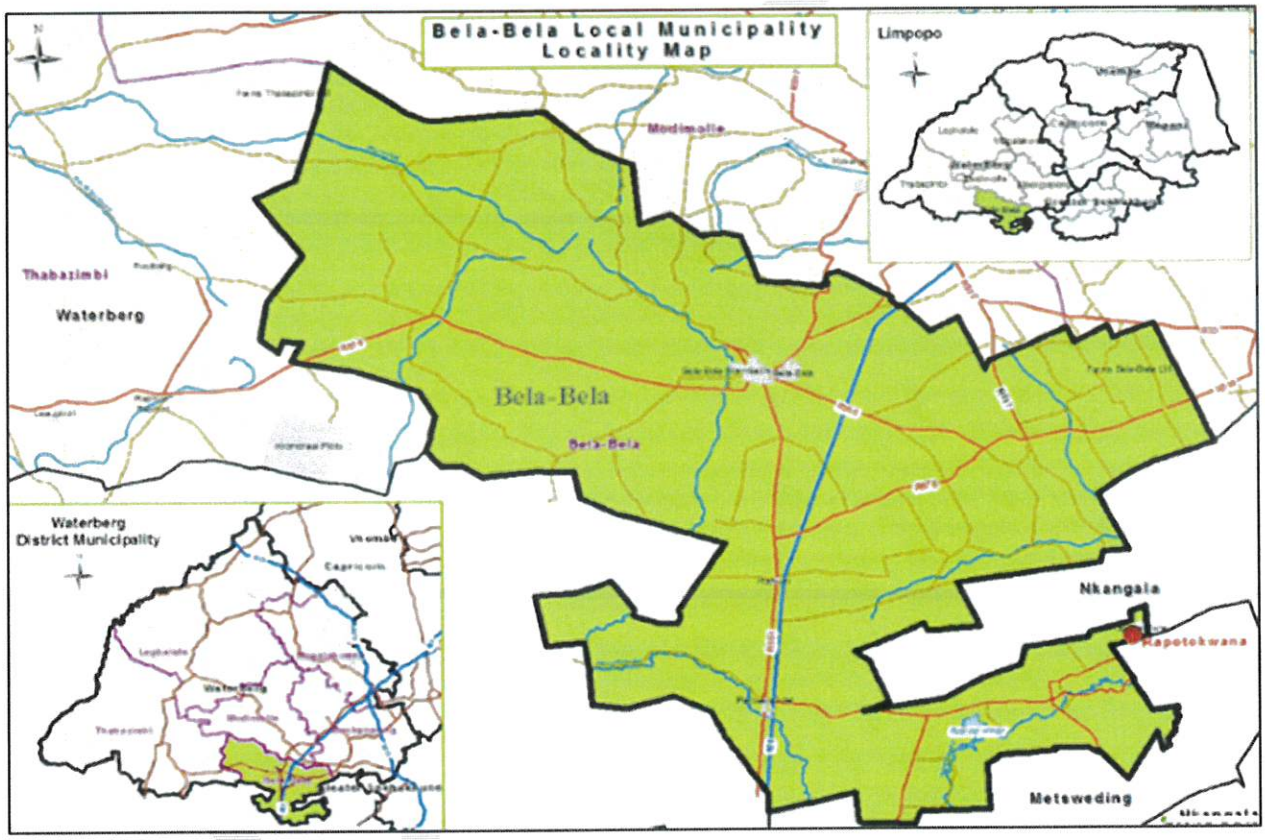

Figure 1: Bela-Bela Local Municipality locality map

The Bela-Bela Municipal area comprises two formal towns: **Bela-Bela Town** and **Pienaarsrivier**, as well as smaller settlements such as **Settlers**, **Radium/Masakhane**, **Rapotokwane**, **Vingerkraal** and **Tsakane**.

According to **Census 2022**, the Municipality has an estimated **population of 64,309 individuals**, representing a decline of 8.42% (11,987 individuals) since the 2016 Community Survey. The number of households, however, increased by 18.9% between 2011 and 2022, reaching approximately **22,449 households**.

Table 1: Population Dynamics and Growth Trends

DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS	CENSUS 2011	COMMUNITY SURVEY 2016	CENSUS 2022
Person indicator	66 500	76 296	64 309
Households indicator	18 068	21 354	22 449

Source: StatsSA - Census, 2022

Bela-Bela Local Municipality is one of the 144 Water Services Authorities (WSAs) in South Africa, with the responsibility for water supply and sanitation service provision. In terms of the Water Services Act (Act No. 108 of 1997), BBLM serves as both a Water Services Authority (WSA) and a Water Services Provider (WSP). This dual mandate requires the Municipality to ensure that all residents have access to basic water supply and sanitation services that meet the prescribed standards of SANS 241 and other relevant regulations.

As a **Category B3** Municipality comprising small Towns and rural Communities, BBLM faces unique challenges in fulfilling its developmental role while ensuring equitable and sustainable service delivery.

Providing basic water supply and sanitation services involves more than developing infrastructure, it also requires effective operation, maintenance, regulation and sustainability management. The Municipality, therefore, has a primary responsibility to provide such services in a sustainable, efficient, and effective manner, ensuring that the needs of current and future generations are met.

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the need to broaden the traditional approach to service provision by integrating water-sensitive urban design, green infrastructure, and climate-resilient development principles. This aligns with the national emphasis on environmental sustainability and long-term resilience in municipal service delivery.

While national policy and legislative frameworks are in place, there remains a gap in local alignment and contextualisation. Bela-Bela Local Municipality acknowledges this challenge and seeks to bridge it through this policy framework.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Water and sanitation services are foundational human rights, crucial for ensuring the well-being and dignity of the residents within the jurisdiction of the Bela-Bela Local Municipality. It is imperative that these services are delivered continuously and equitably. However, the Municipality faces a multitude of challenges in its endeavour to provide these essential services, including but not limited to:

a. **Ageing Infrastructure**

The Municipality continues to struggle with ageing water and sanitation infrastructure, which poses a major constraint to efficient service delivery, operational reliability and long-term sustainability. A significant portion of the existing pipeline network comprising asbestos cement (AC) pipes) is still in operation and is used not only for potable water distribution but also for sanitation reticulation and raw water conveyance. These ageing pipelines are prone to frequent leakages, bursts and blockages, resulting in increased water losses, sewer spillages and high maintenance costs.

Furthermore, the Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTWs) and associated pump stations are operating under severe strain due to outdated mechanical and electrical components, limited automation and insufficient capacity to accommodate growing demand. These challenges compromise treatment efficiency, effluent quality and compliance with regulatory standards set by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS).

b. **Theft and Vandalism**

Frequent incidents of theft and vandalism targeting water and sanitation infrastructure continue to worsen operational challenges and impose significant financial strain on the Municipality. On a weekly basis, the Municipality responds to numerous cases involving the theft of fire hydrants, electrical cables and transformer components, which disrupt service delivery and compromise public safety. In addition, inadequate site security and limited surveillance measures further expose critical infrastructure to damage and losses, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced security interventions and stronger community awareness initiatives to safeguard municipal assets.

c. **Insufficient Bulk Water Supply**

The Municipality faces significant challenges related to inadequate bulk water supply infrastructure, which is unable to meet the growing demand driven by population growth, urban expansion and increased economic activity. The current reliance on surface water sources is proving insufficient, leading to intermittent and unreliable service provision across various communities.

In an effort to augment the existing supply, the Municipality is undertaking initiatives to rehabilitate and resuscitate existing boreholes as supplementary sources. However, several settlements within the municipal area, particularly remote and rural communities, still rely heavily on boreholes as their primary water source. These boreholes have become increasingly unreliable, as many are affected by declining groundwater levels, mechanical breakdowns, power supply interruptions, and water quality issues due to ageing equipment and limited maintenance. In some areas, boreholes have completely dried out, particularly during prolonged droughts, leaving communities without a consistent or safe water source.

The combination of limited surface water capacity, drying boreholes and ageing infrastructure continues to undermine the Municipality's ability to provide sustainable and equitable water services. Addressing these challenges requires urgent investment in bulk water augmentation projects, groundwater monitoring and management and regional collaboration with institutions such as Magalies Water and the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) to ensure a more resilient and diversified water supply system.

d. **Non-Revenue Water**

The overall water balance is determined using a standardised calculation methodology that considers various categories of water use including system input volume, authorised consumption and both accounted-for and unaccounted-for water.

The Municipality faces high water losses due to ageing infrastructure, leaks and inconsistencies between produced and billed water. Losses occur at both the Water Treatment Plant and within the distribution network, leading to low revenue recovery and inefficiency.

To address this, several interventions are underway, including meter audits and replacements, leak detection and pressure management, network rehabilitation, improved billing systems and public awareness campaigns.

Overall, these measures aim to reduce Non-Revenue Water (NRW), enhance operational efficiency, and ensure a sustainable and reliable water supply for Bela-Bela communities.

e. **Operation and Maintenance**

Challenges related to the operation and maintenance (O&M) of water and sanitation infrastructure require urgent attention to safeguard the reliability, efficiency and lifespan of municipal assets. Currently, the Municipality allocates only 1% of its total budget to O&M activities, which is a figure significantly below the **8% benchmark** prescribed by norms and standards, and best practice guidelines. This funding shortfall severely limits the Municipality's capacity to conduct preventive maintenance, timely repairs and system optimisation, leading to recurring breakdowns, service interruptions and accelerated asset deterioration.

f. **Water Supply and Sanitation Services Quality**

There is an urgent need to improve the quality of water and sanitation services to comply with SANS 241 and DWS Blue and Green Drop standards, thereby protecting public health and the environment. The Municipality must strengthen water quality monitoring, treatment process control, and effluent management, while investing in modern technologies and staff capacity building. These measures will enhance compliance, ensure safe and reliable services, and promote community confidence in the Municipality's water and sanitation systems.

g. **Basic Sanitation**

Many residents in informal and newly formalised settlements still lack access to adequate basic sanitation facilities, a situation that compromises public health, environmental hygiene, and the dignity of affected communities. Addressing this gap requires targeted infrastructure investment, community-based sanitation programmes, and collaboration with provincial and national departments to ensure equitable and sustainable service delivery across all areas.

h. **Wastewater and Environmental Safety**

Environmental challenges arising from ineffective wastewater management and non-compliance with regulatory standards require urgent attention to prevent the pollution of water resources and degradation of the natural environment. Strengthening operational efficiency, monitoring systems and compliance with DWS and NEMA regulations is essential to ensure environmentally sustainable wastewater treatment and the long-term protection of aquatic ecosystems.

i. **Faecal Sludge Management**

The Municipality lacks an effective Faecal Sludge Management system, with no structured pit-emptying programme or coordinated approach for collection, treatment, and reuse. While sludge drying beds exist at the Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) and a tariff has been approved for the sale of dried sludge, the beneficial use of faecal sludge remains limited due to inadequate infrastructure and market development.

To address this, the Municipality should implement a Faecal Sludge Management Plan focusing on regular pit-emptying, safe transport and treatment, and the reuse of treated sludge for agriculture or land rehabilitation, in line with DWS guidelines. These actions will enhance public health, environmental protection, and service sustainability.

j. **Regulatory Compliance**

Ensuring regulatory compliance in the delivery of water and sanitation services remains a complex and ongoing challenge that requires dedicated attention. Non-compliance with applicable legislation, standards, and permit conditions including those set by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) may expose the Municipality to legal, financial and environmental risks. Strengthening compliance monitoring, reporting and corrective action mechanisms is therefore essential to ensure accountability, service reliability, and regulatory alignment.

Moreover, a significant portion of the population remains without access to basic water supply and sanitation services, highlighting the urgency of comprehensive interventions.

Considering these multifaceted challenges, it is paramount to develop and implement effective strategies and initiatives that address the identified issues comprehensively. This problem

statement emphasises the need for coordinated efforts, resource allocation and policy implementation to ensure that water and sanitation services in the Municipality are accessible, reliable and of high quality, thereby upholding the fundamental rights and well-being of its residents. Most of WSAs are still facing challenges relating to implementation and enforcement of Water and Sanitation Services Policies.

3. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

3.1 South African Constitution (1996)

a) Section 156 of the Constitution vests the executive authority for water services in Local Government. One of the objectives of Local Government is to ensure the provision of services to Communities in a sustainable manner within their areas of jurisdiction.

b) Section 27(1)(b) of the Constitution 108 of 1996 states that "Everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water.

The Constitution gives national and Provincial Government the authority to regulate the effective performance of Local Government in terms of water services.

c) In terms of Section 154, national and Provincial Government also has an obligation to support and strengthen the capacity of local to provide services.

d) Section 24 of the Constitution states that "everyone has the right to environment that is not harmful to their health and wellbeing and to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations through reasonable legislative and other measures that prevent pollution and ecological degradation".

e) Section 10 of the Constitution states that "everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected".

3.2 Water Services Act, 1997 (Act No. 108 of 1997)

a) In terms of Section 11 (1) of the Water Services Act, every WSA has a duty to all consumers and potential consumers to progressively ensure efficient, affordable, economical, and sustainable access to water services.

b) Sections 3 (1) and (2) of the Water Services Act, states that everyone has a right to access a basic water supply and basic sanitation – this section is related to section 27 of the Constitution.

c) Section 22 provides for the approval to operate as a Water Services Provider and emphasise that Water Services Providers must get an approval of the Water Services Authority.

d) Section 24 provides for the registration of Water Services Intermediaries and that a Water Services Authority may, in its bylaws require the registration of Water Services Intermediaries or classes of such intermediaries within its area of jurisdiction.

e) Section 25 expands on the duties of the Water Services Intermediaries, which includes but not limited to, providing quality, quantity and sustainable water services that meet the minimum standards proscribed by the Minister and any additional minimum standards prescribed by the relevant Water Services Authority.

   The Water Services Intermediary in executing its duties may not charge for water at a tariff which does not comply with any norms and standards prescribed under the Water Services Act, and any additional norms and standards set by the relevant water services authority.

3.3 National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998)

The Act considers, amongst other factors, the following aspects, which directly support the provision of water for multiple uses:

a) Promoting equitable access to water;
b) Redressing the results of past racial and gender discrimination;
c) Promoting the efficient, sustainable, and beneficial use of water in the public interest;
d) Facilitating social and economic development; and
e) Providing for growing demand for water use.

3.4 Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000)

The Municipal Systems Act is the enabling legislation which delineates the Municipalities' duties. It was enacted to: "To provide for the core principles, mechanisms and processes that are necessary to enable municipalities to move progressively towards the social and economic upliftment of local Communities and ensure universal access to essential services that are affordable to all;". The following sections are of vital importance:

a) Section 4 speaks directly to Section 27 of the Constitution, explicitly binding municipal councils to the progressive realisation of access to water within its jurisdiction.

b) Section 5(1), the Municipal Systems Act expressly guarantees Communities the correlative right to meaningful engagement, involvement, and communication. It also guarantees "access to municipal services which the Municipality provides, provided the duties set out in subsection (2)(b) are complied with.".
c) Section 26 provides that, in order to give effect to these duties and the progressive realisation of socio-economic rights, municipalities are also obligated to draft and produce integrated development plans (IDPs). These plans are supposed to map out how a Municipality is to manage its resources in a way that develops its constituent Communities and addresses those Communities' needs.
d) Section 73 obliges municipalities to ensure "ensure that all members of the local Community have access to at least the minimum level of basic municipal services.".
e) Section 76 -81 talks about different mechanism that can be used for provision of services. Municipalities are therefore required to focus on the provision of these basic services and may not prioritise other services at the expense of basic services.

3.5 GNR.509 of 8 June 2001

Regulations relating to compulsory national standards and measures to conserve water Section 9 of the Water Services Act, 1997, give the Minister of Water and Sanitation the power to prescribe compulsory standards.

a) Regulation 2(b) of the Regulations provides that the minimum standard for basic sanitation services is a toilet which is safe, reliable, environmentally sound, easy to keep clean, provides privacy and protection against the weather, well ventilated, keeps smells to a minimum and prevents entry and exit of flies and other disease-carrying pests.
b) Regulation 3(b) determines the minimum standard for basic water supply services as:
    i. a minimum quantity of potable water of 25 litres per person per day or 6 kilolitres per household per month – i.e., at a minimum flow rate of not less than 10 litres per minute;
    ii. within 200 metres of a household;
    iii. with an effectiveness such that no consumer is without a supply for more than seven full days in any year.

4. POLICY PURPOSE

The provision of basic water supply and sanitation services within the Bela-Bela Local Municipality necessitates a comprehensive approach that engages all relevant Stakeholders in a sustainable

and improved delivery of these essential services. To collectively strive toward the overarching goal of enhanced water supply and sanitation services provision, it is imperative to understand and harmonise the policies and practices of pertinent Stakeholders and service providers. This collaborative approach seeks to prevent unintended discrepancies and potential conflicts that could impede service delivery.

This Water and Sanitation Services Policy will elevate the delivery of basic water supply and sanitation services to residents by aligning municipal administration with the planning, bylaws, and legislation governing water and sanitation services within the region. The primary purpose of this policy is to achieve the following key objectives:

a) **Provision of Free Basic Water and Sanitation Services**
   Ensure that indigent citizens have access to free basic water services, promoting social equity and addressing the basic needs of vulnerable populations.
b) **Equitable Access to Water Services**
   Guarantee equitable and fair access to water services, considering financial, technological, socio-economic, and conservation factors, thereby fostering inclusivity and sustainability.
c) **Compliance with Regulatory Framework**
   Enforce compliance with pertinent legislation and bylaws governing water supply, promoting responsible ownership and adherence to established standards.
d) **Consistent Approach to Alternative Water Sources**
   Establish a uniform approach to evaluating and implementing alternative water sources to ensure the sustainable provision of water and related products and services, aligning with evolving industry best practices.

By pursuing these objectives, the Bela-Bela Local Municipality aims to enhance the quality, availability and fairness of basic water supply and sanitation services for its residents while embracing innovative and sustainable approaches to meet the evolving needs of the Community.

This policy emphasises the commitment to effectively manage and improve essential services, fostering the well-being and development of the region.

5. POLICY SCOPE

The policy applies to Bela-Bela Local. Municipality, residents, private and public institutions, those living on privately owned land and all water services users within the Municipality's jurisdiction.

6. POLICY POSITIONS

The policy positions outlined in this document seek to align the Municipality with the National Sanitation Policy of 2016, National Water Policy Review of 2013 and all approved relevant national polices. Subsequently, the provision of these services will be undertaken through various mechanisms as outlined in national legislations.

Furthermore, this policy will be implemented within the context of the following guiding factors:

a) Affordability
b) Institutional needs
c) Environmental impact
d) Social issues
e) Water supply service levels
f) Reliability
g) Upgrading
h) Site-specific issues
i) Use of local resources
j) Settlement patterns
k) Compliance with Norms and Standards, Ownership of the infrastructure & Operation and maintenance and capital development.

6.1. PROVISION OF WATER SUPPLY SERVICES

The Municipality, in accordance with Section 27 (2) of the Constitution, seeks for the realisation of the provision of basic water supply to all within its jurisdiction. As guided by national policy and legislation, the Municipality seeks to achieve the progressive realisation for provision of water supply services through these Service Level Standards: **Basic; Interim; Emergency and Disaster Situations**

6.1.1. BASIC LEVEL OF WATER SUPPLY SERVICES

Problem Statement

Despite the fundamental right to basic water supply, some areas including rural areas in the Bela-Bela Local Municipality still lack access to adequate water services. The existing infrastructure falls short, with residents resorting to unauthorised connections, compromising the supply for others.

Additionally, the correlation between enhanced water supply and increased sanitation demands presents an added challenge. Unplanned settlements further escalate costs. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensuring equitable, sustainable, and healthy water services for all rural residents.

Policy Position

In accordance with all national policies and standards, the Bela-Bela Local Municipality commits to the provision of basic level of water supply at:

a) A minimum quantity of potable water of 25 litres per person per day or a minimum of 6 kl/household per month.
b) The access to water supply or delivery point will be provided at least at the boundary of the stand in all formalised settlements.
c) Water provided will comply with the SANS 241 quality standards.
d) Implementation of special meters that can detect and regulate the basic consumption of water.
e) User pay principle will be applied to all water services end user.
f) The Municipality will develop the water safety plan with working with the WSP, to determine water quality standards and management. The water safety plan will be developed in accordance World Health Organisation (WHO) Guidelines for Drinking Water and reviewed on an annual basis.
g) The Municipality will ensure continuous monitoring of drinking water quality in accordance with SANS 241. The monitoring mechanism will be compliant with the water quality monitoring programme.
h) A Water Services Development Plan (WSDP) will be developed and reviewed annually. And will be incorporated into the Integrated Development Plan (IDP).
i) The Bela-Bela Local Municipality reserves the right to intervene (including to restrict supplies, terminate or discontinue yard supplies and the likes), if required to restore basic supplies to all.

6.1.2. FREE BASIC WATER SUPPLY SERVICES

Problem Statement

The provision of Free Basic Services (FBS) continues to place a heavy strain on the Municipality's limited resources, particularly in cases where beneficiaries are financially able to pay for such services. With constrained financial and operational capacity, it is critical for the Municipality to target FBS strictly to registered indigent households, in alignment with the Indigent Policy, rather than applying a blanket approach.

Furthermore, there is a growing concern that many consumers exceed the allocated free basic water supply, leading to increased operational costs and further pressure on municipal budgets. This highlights the need for enhanced consumer education, strict monitoring of water consumption, and the review of FBS implementation mechanisms to ensure fairness, sustainability, and compliance with municipal policy objectives.

Policy Position

a) The provision of free basic water supply will be provided to indigent customers only, with indigence status determined by the guidelines specified in the indigent policy and subsequent registration on the indigent register. It is the responsibility of the indigent household to register with the Municipality.
b) Indigent households meeting the defined criteria will be eligible to receive the initial allocation of the first 6kl (6,000 litres) of water per month at no cost to the indigent.
c) Upon depletion of the initial 6kl allocation, qualifying indigent households will be subject to usage restrictions and will be responsible for payment based on the adopted tariff for any additional water consumed.
d) It is incumbent upon the user to actively employ all available water conservation methods to ensure the responsible and sustainable use of this vital resource, thereby preventing wastage and misuse.
e) The free basic water policy will not apply to businesses. All water services consumed by businesses would have to be paid for in accordance with the adopted tariff.
f) The Municipality reserves the right to review the Free Basic Water (FBW) policy with a view to change the targeted level of service and quantity of water under this policy as and when required in the interest of affordability, effectiveness, and sustainability of provision of free basic water.

6.1.3 INTERIM WATER SUPPLY

Problem Statement

The Municipality is obliged by the Constitution to provide water supply services to all residents within its jurisdiction. This includes those living in informal settlements, privately owned land, rural areas and other in-formalised settlement types.

The Municipality is confronted with the growing challenge of mushrooming of informal settlements, which continue to increase the demand for basic water supply services. These unplanned developments are often established outside the design parameters and service coverage of the Municipality's bulk and reticulation infrastructure, making it difficult to provide water services through conventional network connections. As a result, the Municipality must explore alternative service delivery approaches, such as communal standpipes and water tankering, while working towards the formalisation and integration of these areas into the long-term water services planning framework.

Policy Position

a) Interim water supply services are a temporary water supply service measure and will be provided, within reasonable walking distance, water of an adequate quality from a health point of view.
b) As per SFWS (2003), interim water supply services will be provided for consumers living in informal settlements that are yet to be formalised. In the case of informal settlements, this service will be provided until such a time that tenure is established which will allow the Municipality to provide permanent services.
c) Once interim water supply services have been provided by the Municipality, all other illegal connections will be disconnected, and any reconnection will be punishable (as stated by the bylaws)
d) The level of provision of these services will vary based on factors including but not limited to, location, population density, availability of bulk water and reticulation infrastructure and lasty as per Section 27 (2) of the constitution which states that *the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right.*

6.1.4. WATER SUPPLY DURING EMERGENCY AND DISASTER SITUATION

Problem Statement

Recently there has been an increase in natural disasters which has left water and sanitation infrastructure extensively damaged, leaving many without access to basic water supply services.

Policy Position

a) Whenever water shortages are declared, the Municipality will impose reasonable limitations on its consumers' water consumption in its water supply network to ensure compliance with written notices issued under Schedule 3, section 6 of the National Water Act (NWA).
b) Disaster situations will be responded to in compliance with National Disaster Management Act (NDMA).
c) Emergency and disaster situations will be dealt with under the prescripts of the Water Services Act (1997) which state that *emergency water supply appropriate to the situation must be provided in the interim while the Municipality works on restoring basic water supply services.*
d) Interim water supply services will also be in effect during disaster and emergency situations.

6.1.5. DRINKING WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Problem Statement

The quality of drinking water continues to face challenges, particularly during the rainy season, when manganese concentrations in raw water increase significantly. The existing Water Treatment Works (WTW) was not originally designed nor adequately equipped to treat such elevated manganese levels, leading to occasional fluctuations in treated water quality.

However, the Municipality is actively conducting operational monitoring to track manganese levels and has implemented process optimisation measures at the plant to mitigate the impact. These ongoing efforts aim to improve treatment efficiency, maintain compliance with SANS 241 standards, and ensure the continued supply of safe and acceptable drinking water to residents.

Policy Position

a) As per the Water Services Act (1997), the Municipality is the WSA responsible for the provision of quality water to all residents across all service level standards.

b) The quality of water provided for consumption must be in accordance with the currently accepted minimum standards with respect to health-related chemical and microbial contaminants. As such, a water monitoring program is developed to monitor drinking water quality as per South African National Standards (SANS 241).
c) Furthermore, the analysis of drinking water quality must be undertaken by an accredited laboratory and all results obtained are uploaded onto IRIS and published annually in suitable media accessible to relevant Stakeholders.
d) Water quality from boreholes, like handpumps where there is no treatment system in place, must be analysed before the borehole is equipped to ensure that water quality is suitable for human consumption.
e) The Municipality will conduct frequent testing at regular intervals of said boreholes to ensure that they remain compliant with the standards outlined in SANS 241.
f) The Municipality has a Water Safety Plan which is reviewed every three years. This is used to continuously ensure the quality and safety of drinking water using risk assessment and risk management from the point of abstraction up to the point of use.

6.1.6. WATER CONSERVATION AND WATER DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Problem Statement

South Africa has an ever-growing population that is in constant need of water for both consumption and sanitation services which places great stress on the available water resources. Moreover, the increased occurrence of water leaks and pipe bursts, illegal and unmetered connections have put further stress on the Municipality's ability to provide water supply services effectively and sustainably.

The Bela-Bela Local Municipality has observed numerous cases where water meters in low-cost housing areas record abnormally high consumption levels. In most instances, this excessive consumption is not due to actual water use but rather continuous leakages from damaged pipes, taps, or internal fittings within consumer premises. Many affected residents are either unable or unwilling to repair these leaks, resulting in ongoing water losses and inflated billing, which are both financially unsustainable for the Municipality and the consumer.

These avoidable losses also place unnecessary pressure on already limited water resources. Addressing internal leaks through consumer education, support programmes, and community-based leak repair initiatives would therefore benefit both the Municipality and the affected households, by reducing water losses, improving billing accuracy and promoting responsible water use.

Policy Position

a) The Municipality will develop a water conservation and demand management strategy to address water losses and leaks within its area of jurisdiction.
b) A Water Balance Strategy will be developed to determine water demand according to the different categories this includes:
c) All unmetered connections, including all currently unmetered standpipes, must be metered and registered as connections. Ensure every standpipe is metered in clusters and meters read regularly for billing to relevant Government/Municipality department.
d) Appropriate metering, illegal connection and real loss reduction policies need to be developed and implemented.
e) Zoning of supply systems into discreet zones to ensure proper network management.
f) Implement a leak detection and repair programs to reduce real losses.
g) Consumers with high internal leak levels (leaks within the boundary of the stand/property) should be identified and will be compelled to repair at their own expense.
h) Implement initiatives to register unregistered connections.
i) Highest Priority must be given to the high burst frequency and high-water loss areas.
j) All water connections and new installations should be formalised in the billing system in all local Municipality.
k) The Municipality's billing section shall note a consumer with a high meter reading.

6.2. PROVISION OF SANITATION SERVICES

"Water is life – sanitation is dignity". The Constitution states that it is the right of all South Africans to dignity. Sanitation is one of the basic human rights that contribute to the realisation of this right. It is therefore the duty of the Municipality to ensure that this right is fulfilled through the provision of sanitation services. As guided by national policy and legislature, the Municipality seeks the progressive realisation for provision of sanitation services through these Service Level Standards: Basic; **Interim; Emergency and Disaster Situations.**

6.2.1. BASIC LEVEL OF SANITATION SERVICE

Problem Statement

There is still a considerable number of people who do not have access basic sanitation services, thus utilise the bucket system and practice open defecation. In cases where on-site sanitation facilities are provided, most of those facilities are full and there is no clear pit-emptying plan.

Policy Position

a) The standard for basic sanitation services must include the provision of a toilet with functional hand washing facility in the yard, which is safe, reliable for 24 hours a day, environmentally sound, easy to keep clean, provides privacy and protection against the weather, well ventilated, keeps smells to a minimum and prevents the entry and exit of flies and other disease-carrying pests, providing for an effective and acceptable on-site sanitation technology.
b) The Municipality will take responsibility of pit-emptying at the end user's expense.

6.2.2. FREE BASIC SANITATION

Problem Statement

The provision of Free Basic Services (FBS) places a significant strain on the Municipality's limited financial and operational resources, particularly in cases where recipients have the capacity to pay for such services. Given these constraints, it is essential for the Municipality to manage its resources efficiently and ensure that FBS are directed strictly to qualifying indigent households, in accordance with the Municipality's Indigent Policy. Applying a blanket approach to the provision of FBS undermines the Municipality's financial sustainability and its ability to deliver equitable and targeted support to those most in need.

Policy Position

a) The provision of free basic sanitation will be provided to indigent household only, with indigence status determined by the guidelines specified in the indigent policy and subsequent registration on the indigent register. It is the responsibility of the indigent household to register with the Municipality.
b) The indigent households need to meet the requirements outlined within the indigent policy and be registered on the indigent register.

c) The type of sanitation provided shall be determined by the WSA based on criteria such as, geography, population density, affordability, etc.

d) An additional free 4kl of water shall be provided to all indigents who use waterborne sanitation system, after the additional 4kl, the consumer shall be charged for the water consumed.

e) The Municipality shall provide all needed sanitation infrastructure and provide the necessary services linked with the type of sanitation service offered (i.e., emptying of VIPs and septic tanks) at no cost to the indigent customer. The end user is responsible for reasonable maintenance measures.

f) Bela-Bela Local Municipality will maintain all municipal built VIP within the Municipality to the minimum standard identified in the DWS Technical Guidelines.

g) The household will be responsible for all routine maintenance which can be attributed to normal usage.

h) Should the VIP require maintenance that is a result of poor workmanship or latent defects in the infrastructure, the Bela-Bela Local Municipality will take responsibility for its rehabilitation.

i) Bela-Bela Local Municipality will take responsibility for pit emptying or the relocation of top structures of new pits. (It is recommended that homeowners are not left to relocate their own structures as soil be reinforced through the construction of a suitable collar or lining, and the pit and collar dimensions must be accurate. Inappropriate construction may lead to collapsing pits and damaged latrines.)

j) If the VIP structure is damaged during emptying or relocating, the Bela-Bela Local Municipality will take responsibility for the damages.

k) Prior to full scale delivery, the VIP latrine backlog eradication programme will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and recommendations made to reduce life cycle costs and harmonise the capital expenditure with the maintenance budget.

l) The scheduling of emptying programmes should take cognisance of observed filling rates associated with actual pit volumes. The frequency will be subject to the volume of the pit provided but will typically be no less than 5 years between maintenance tasks performed by Bela-Bela Local Municipality.

m) The Bela-Bela Local Municipality will monitor the pit filling rates on an annual basis.

n) The Bela-Bela Local Municipality will make allowance for ad-hoc pit emptying for pits that fill up more quickly than expected.

o) For large households (a large household is where the number of family members are permanently residing at households exceeds 7) where the standard pit size is insufficient for a 5-year emptying cycle, Bela-Bela Local Municipality will consider the provision of a second latrine or larger pit.

p) Where the useful pit volume beneath a fixed structure is less than 1.5m, or is insufficient to the size of household, (due to design, shallow groundwater, sanitation provision in a particular Community and perform a cost benefit analysis to assess whether one of the following options may be more cost effective than the high frequency of emptying:

   i. Replace fixed latrine with a moveable structure over a new pit.
   ii. Pit contents must not be disposed into sewers or Wastewater Treatment Works as this is likely to overload the biological process and lead to plant failure.

q) Improved solid waste management should be implemented by the Municipality, through re-use, recycling, reduction and collection. This will prevent the accumulation of solid waste in latrine pits and will therefore slow down the rate of pit filling. (*This practice could extend the pit life by 50% resulting in significant cost savings on the VIP latrine maintenance plan).*

r) Service providers will be paid based on the volume of waste emptied from the pit.

s) The method for pit emptying shall be selected by service provider but will need to be approved by the Bela-Bela Local Municipality. In selecting a methodology, the service provider must take due attention of the Specification for pit emptying which requires minimum spillage of sludge and appropriate occupational health and safety provision for workers and the public.

t) An awareness programme or end-user education will run parallel with emptying of latrines. This programme will inform households of their obligations to look after their latrine in accordance with this policy.

u) Households failing to comply with the requirements identified in the awareness programme will be charged in full for the cost of repairs and will be charged proportionally for the additional cost of emptying (i.e., of the pit is found to contain 40 % of the cost of solid waste they will be liable for 40% of the cost of emptying).

6.2.3. INTERIM SANITATION SERVICES

Problem Statement

The Municipality is obliged by the constitution to provide sanitation services to all residents within its jurisdiction. This includes those living in informal settlements, privately owned land, rural areas and other in-formalised settlement types.

The Municipality faces a growing challenge of mushrooming informal settlements that require access to basic sanitation services. These unplanned developments fall outside the design parameters and capacity of the Municipality's existing wastewater treatment and reticulation systems, making it difficult to provide sanitation services through conventional infrastructure-based methods. As a result, the Municipality must explore alternative and interim sanitation solutions, such as on-site sanitation systems, ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrines, and communal ablution facilities, while developing a long-term plan for the integration of these areas into the formal sanitation network as part of future infrastructure expansion programmes.

Policy Position

a) Interim sanitation services will be provided for residents dwelling on informal settlements and privately owned land until such a time that tenure can be secured for the provision of permanent sanitation services.
b) The type services will vary based on factors including but not limited to, location, population density, availability of bulk water infrastructure and reticulation.

6.2.4. SANITATION DURING EMERGENCY AND DISASTER SITUATIONS

Problem Statement

In recent years, the Municipality has experienced an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, such as flooding, storms, and droughts, which have caused extensive damage to water and sanitation infrastructure. These events have disrupted service delivery, leaving many communities without reliable access to basic water supply and sanitation services.

Compounding this challenge, heavy rainfall during the rainy season often leads to stormwater ingression into the sewer network through damaged manholes, cracked pipes, and illegal connections, resulting in frequent sewer blockages, overflows, and pump station failures. This not only places additional strain on the wastewater treatment systems but also poses serious environmental and public health risks. The growing impact of climate-related disasters and stormwater intrusion highlights the urgent need to strengthen infrastructure resilience, upgrade ageing systems and implement comprehensive disaster risk and stormwater management measures to ensure sustainable and reliable water and sanitation service delivery.

Policy Position

a) Whenever basic sanitation services cannot be provided, the Water Services Act (1997) provides for the procedure to limit or discontinue water services in case of emergency situations. Furthermore, section 21(2) (e) (i) *mandates that every water services authority must make bylaws which may provide for the general limitation or discontinuation of water services where (i) national disasters cause disruptions in the provision of services or (ii) sufficient water is not available for any other reason.*

b) Disaster situations will be responded to in compliance with National Disaster Management Act.

c) For the purpose of this policy, the Municipality shall provide sanitation services as outlined within "Interim Sanitation Services."

d) The Municipality will provide reasonable and appropriate alternative temporary sanitation solutions for its residents until such a time that basic sanitation services can be restored. The Municipality will inform users of any interruption in its network to ensure compliance with written notices issued under Schedule 3, section 6 of the National Water Act.

e) As per the National Sanitation Policy of 2016, the Municipality will ensure that sanitation during emergency and disaster situations will be:

    i. culturally and socially accepted,

ii. reflect the vulnerabilities, needs and preferences of the affected population,

f) The Municipality is committed to applying reasonable measures to uphold the dignity of its people and reducing the transmission of faecal oral diseases during such situations through the promotion of:
   i. Good hygiene practices;
   ii. The provision of safe drinking water;
   iii. The reduction of environmental health risks

g) During such times, the Municipality's operation and maintenance budget and available grants shall be used to conduct repairs on affected infrastructure.

6.2.5. GREYWATER MANAGEMENT

Problem Statement

Greywater is often perceived as clean compared to blackwater which carries substantial health and environmental risks. It can harbour disease-causing organisms, suspended matter, and chemicals from various household products. The quality of greywater fluctuates based on household factors, including occupants' habits, health, and product usage. High variability arises due to diverse sources such as soaps and cleaning agents. Excessive salts and chemicals in greywater pose threats to soil structure and vegetation, leading to reduced water absorption capacity and potential ecological damage. Effective management strategies, particularly in reducing sodium content, are crucial to mitigating these risks and ensuring safe greywater reuse practices. There is high prevalence of misguided use greywater in households.

Policy Position

a) Untreated greywater (from a greywater diversion device) must only be used via subsurface irrigation. Subsurface irrigation systems reduce exposure to humans, pets and other animals which may otherwise come into contact with the untreated greywater and potentially transfer disease causing organisms.
b) Specific setback distances from buildings, boundaries, wells, bores, watercourses, swimming pools and rainwater tanks are required to be met for all irrigation systems. This is to prevent contamination and transmission of disease.
c) Greywater must not be used in a manner that will result in direct contact with vegetables or other edible plants eaten uncooked. It may be used to irrigate above-ground food plants

such as fruit trees and leaf vegetables where the fruit or edible vegetable part does not make direct contact with the greywater.

d) Greywater must be contained within the confines of the premises on which it is generated and not be permitted to run off onto neighbouring properties.

e) Greywater must not run onto driveways or any hard surfaces where it can run into the street and into stormwater drains and eventually into surface waters e.g., rivers and dams.

f) Only products with no or very low phosphorus content should be used. Phosphorus content can range from a low content of 0.05% up to 10% in various detergents. Low or no phosphorus products will mean less phosphorus can possibly reach waterways via subsoil flow, runoff or stormwater, which can create serious water quality problems. The use of any phosphate rich washing powder will poison your soil over the long term. There are phosphate free washing powders on the market, and these must be used.

g) Greywater tends to be slightly alkaline, with a typical pH range of between 6.5 and 10.5, and the extensive use of greywater for irrigation could cause the soil to become progressively more alkaline. A washing detergents ability to remove stains is linked the pH. Soil and greases are more easily removed at a high pH. Shade loving and acid loving plants do not like the alkalinity of greywater. These include azaleas, camellias, gardenias, begonias and ferns.

h) Washing powders that contain sodium salts as bulking agents should be used sparingly. High levels of sodium can produce saline (i.e., salty) greywater. Sodium is detrimental to plants, can damage soil structure, reducing the air space, giving it a greasy texture and poor drainage capability. Liquid detergents (instead of powders) or products which use potassium salts should be used as they produce better quality, less saline greywater.

i) The policy discusses all three greywater reuse options. The greywater system however requires thorough examinations of its installation, operation, maintenance requirements and quality of output before approving its installation.

6.2.6. FAECAL SLUDGE MANAGEMENT

Problem Statement

The Municipality lacks an effective Faecal Sludge Management (FSM) system and structured pit-emptying programme, resulting in uncoordinated collection, treatment, and reuse of sludge. Although sludge drying beds exist at the Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) with an approved tariff for dried sludge, utilisation remains limited due to infrastructure and market constraints. The growing population and unregulated disposal practices have further strained the wastewater system. There is an urgent need to develop a Faecal Sludge Management Plan to regulate disposal activities, improve treatment, and promote safe and beneficial sludge reuse.

Policy Position

a) The Municipality or the authorised provider, may, at its discretion, and subject to such conditions as it may specify, accept faecal sludge transported by honey suckers for disposal delivered to the Municipality's wastewater treatment plants. Industries are required to comply with the policy prescripts.
b) No person shall discharge faecal sludge into the Municipality's wastewater treatment plants by road haulage except with the written permission of the Municipality or the authorised provider, and subject to such period and any conditions that may be imposed terms of the written permission.
c) The charges for any faecal sludge delivered for disposal to the Municipality's wastewater treatment plants shall be assessed by the Municipality or the authorised provider, in accordance with the prescribed tariffs of charges.
d) No disposal of faecal sludge by honey suckers at any point that has not been approved by the Municipality is allowed.
e) When faecal sludge is delivered by honey suckers-
    i. The time of delivery shall be arranged with the Municipality or the authorised provider, and
    ii. The nature and composition of the faecal sludge shall be established to the satisfaction of the Municipality or the authorised provider, prior to the discharge thereof and no person shall deliver faecal sludge that does not comply with the standards laid down in terms of these Municipality by-laws.

f) The Municipality or the authorised provider, may withdraw any permission, after giving at least fourteen days written notice of its intention to a person permitted to discharge faecal sludge by honey suckers if the person -

   i. fails to ensure that the faecal sludge so delivered conforms to the standards prescribed in the written permission; or

   ii. fails or refuses to comply with any notice lawfully served on him or her in terms of any permission granted to him or her; and

   iii. fails to pay the assessed charges in respect of any faecal sludge delivered.

g) In the reuse of water, the Bela-Bela Local Municipality must strive for the best practicable protection of health and environmental option that will maximise social and fiscal benefits in an integrated way with water supply and other municipal services.

6.2.7. WASTEWATER SLUDGE MANAGEMENT

Problem Statement

Sludge disposal within the Municipality remains largely dependent on on-site methods, such as stockpiling and burying, which provide limited environmental and economic value. Although sludge drying beds are available at the Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW), their potential is not fully utilised due to limited technical capacity and insufficient awareness of the beneficial uses of treated sludge.

To move towards a more sustainable and resource-oriented approach, the Municipality should adopt the "reduce, reuse, recycle, and reclamation" principles. By optimising the use of the existing drying beds and promoting the safe reuse of treated sludge, for example in agriculture, soil conditioning or land rehabilitation, the Municipality can reduce environmental impact, generate economic benefits, and advance circular economy practices within its sanitation management framework.

Policy Position

a) Wastewater sludge needs to be classified in accordance to part 6 of the "Guidelines for the utilisation and Disposal of wastewater sludge".

b) Guidelines are to be used to establish which management options are suitable for the sludge for the type and quality of sludge generated by the wastewater treatment works.

c) The result of analysis of samples needs to be utilised to classify the sludge which is determined by the microbiological, stability and pollutant quality of the sludge thereafter the sludge may be used based its classification.

d) Agricultural use of sludge as soil conditioner or manufacturing compost not destined for use by the public.

e) Disposal of sludge on or off-site including creation of stockpiles, existing dedicated sludge land disposal site, onsite disposal of sludge in a mono disposal landfill or lagoon or by marine discharge.

f) Utilising of the sludge in a beneficial manner (other than agricultural use) such as for rehabilitation of mine deposits, aiding in the remediation of contaminated soil, as an adsorbent as a nursery growth medium, once off high-rate land application, capping of landfills, beneficial land application at high loading rates and amelioration of degraded soils.

g) Using thermal treatment methods including incineration of the sludge in dedicated incinerators or by means of incineration in furnaces, cement kilns etc.

h) Using sludge to produce saleable products including pellets, compost for sale to the public, manufacturing of bricks, paving, artificial rocks and other products as well as brick making.

7. WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION SERVICES ON PRIVATELY OWNED LAND

Problem Statement

A significant number of residents living on privately owned land, particularly within farming communities and rural areas, continue to lack access to basic water supply and sanitation services, undermining their dignity, health, and constitutional rights. Many of these areas have no existing infrastructure for water reticulation or sanitation, and the cost of extending such services is often financially unaffordable for both the Municipality and the affected households.

Efforts by the Municipality to provide services in these areas are further constrained by limited access to privately owned land, complex land tenure arrangements, and legal restrictions that delay or prevent municipal intervention. In some cases, property owners or local authorities are reluctant or opposed to allowing the installation of municipal infrastructure for communities residing on their land without formal authorisation.

Despite these challenges, equitable access to basic services remains a fundamental constitutional right as outlined in Section 27 of the Constitution and reinforced by the Water Services Act (Act 108 of 1997) and related legislation. Addressing service delivery gaps in private land settlements therefore requires a collaborative and integrated approach, linking water and sanitation provision with broader spatial development, housing delivery, poverty alleviation and skills development programmes.

This policy recognises the complexity and sensitivity of providing services on privately owned land but underscores the urgent need for context-specific solutions, including alternative service technologies, affordable off-grid systems and partnerships with landowners and sector departments to ensure that all residents regardless of land tenure can enjoy safe, reliable and dignified access to basic water and sanitation services.

Policy Position

a) The Municipality has an obligation to provide water and sanitation services to those people living on privately owned land who are not receiving such services from the landowner.
b) All available mechanism shall be explored and used to provide permanent services to those dwelling on privately owned land. Until such a time that this can be achieved, the Municipality will provide interim services as outlined in the Water and Sanitation Services Policy on Privately Owned Land
c) The Municipality will in its bylaws put prescripts that gives them power to enter any private land for the provision of water and sanitation services.

d) Landowners are encouraged to be accommodative of the municipal's effort to provide water and sanitation services to people living on privately owned land.

e) Any landowner, that refuses the Municipality to dispatch its duty, will be subjected to various actions by the Municipality, that includes getting a servitude for that land or the Municipality will expropriate the land.

f) In planning for the provision of water services on privately owned land the particular circumstances prevailing should be taken into account.

g) Where the landowner is providing or prepared to provide water services to the settlement, a contract between Bela-Bela Local Municipality as the WSA and the landowner as intermediary or water services provider must be negotiated and established.

h) The landowner must guarantee the protection of the settlement's existence at that location for at least 20 years.

i) Residential complexes and estates will not be regarded, for the purpose of this policy, privately owned land.

j) The Municipality will provide water and sanitation infrastructure up to Basic Services level to all households in the settlement.

k) Where water is provided to the property from a source other than a municipal main, water to the settlement from that same source may be negotiated.

l) Where municipal piped water is provided to the property, the water main to the settlement:

   i. Will be connected to the water supply line to the property with a water meter at both connections.

   ii. The water usage of the property will be determined by subtracting the settlement's reading from the meter at the entrance of the property.

   iii. No external draw-off to be connected beyond the meter at the settlement.

m) Any upgrading required to the property supply line and meter up to Basic Services level will be to the Municipality's account.

n) The intermediary or water services provider contract may extend the offer of rebates to include other municipal services on the property provided such rebates are transparent, legal and in proportion to the higher level of service provided to the occupants of the settlement.

o) Where Bela-Bela Local Municipality is not able to negotiate the landowner to accept being a party to a contract as an intermediary, or a water services provider, the Municipality will be the one providing the services and other methods of resettling the Community onto municipal land will be explored.

p) In terms of this Policy, Bela-Bela Local Municipality commits itself to the following principles:

i. To strive to promote job creation, poverty eradication and the development of skills and the creation of employment opportunities in the development and implementation of services.

ii. To ensure that sanitation improvement is accompanied by environmental and health and hygiene promotional education and preserving the dignity of all people.

iii. To ensure that water services planning strives for the best practicable environmental option that will maximise health, social, and environmental benefits in an integrated way with water supply and other municipal services, with consideration of the temporary nature of the service.

iv. To ensure that the development of water services is linked to municipal policies dealing with indigence through the provision of basic services and the progressive use of the equitable share.

v. To establish fair and equitable procedures and processes whereby the owners of the property on which the informal and transient settlements are located could request water services in order to start the process.

vi. To ensure that for provision of water services for settlements that are accommodated by private landowners, the circumstances prevailing is taken into account.

8. OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE

Problem Statement

Effective infrastructure management plays a critical role in ensuring the efficient and sustainable provision of water and sanitation services within the Bela-Bela Local Municipality. However, this remains a persistent challenge due to insufficient budget allocations for operation and maintenance (O&M) activities, which have limited the Municipality's ability to carry out routine maintenance and timely infrastructure rehabilitation.

Although the Municipality has developed an Asset Management Plan, its implementation has been constrained by financial limitations, resulting in inconsistent application of maintenance schedules and delayed replacement of ageing assets. Compounding these challenges are ongoing issues of infrastructure vandalism, illegal water and sewer connections, and the rapid deterioration of critical components, all of which further undermine service reliability and asset longevity.

Strengthening the implementation of the Asset Management Plan, coupled with adequate O&M funding, enhanced security measures, and community awareness programmes, will be essential to safeguard municipal infrastructure and improve long-term service sustainability.

Policy Position

a) Allocation of sufficient budget to ensure operation and maintenance of water supply and sanitation infrastructure.
b) A business plan will be drafted to request funds from municipal and national coffers to ensure there is sufficient budget for operation and maintenance of infrastructure resources.
c) An Asset Management Plan that covers both water and sanitation services will be developed to ensure cost-reflective management. This plan will also encompass operation, maintenance and repair costs during emergency and disaster situations.
d) The Municipality will educate end users on the proper management and use of all water supply and sanitation services infrastructure.
e) Municipality is responsible for the maintenance of the infrastructure up to the boundary user connection, the maintenance of the infrastructure within the boundary of the yard is the responsibility of the owner.

9. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Problem Statement

Finance is a critical enabler of effective service delivery within the Municipality. It is therefore essential that the Municipality manages its finances efficiently and transparently to sustain the provision of reliable water and sanitation services to its customers.

However, the Municipality continues to face significant financial challenges that hinder its ability to adequately fund operations, maintenance, and infrastructure development programmes. These challenges include but are not limited to:

a) Low revenue collection levels and non-payment for services rendered;

b) Inconsistent tariff setting practices that do not align with annual cost reviews; and

c) Non-cost-reflective tariffs, which fail to recover the full cost of providing services.

Addressing these financial constraints through enhanced revenue collection strategies, cost-reflective tariff structures and sound financial management practices will strengthen the Municipality's capacity to maintain financial stability and ensure the sustainable delivery of essential services.

Policy Position

a) For the Municipality to achieve its financial goals, the Municipality shall:
   i. Develop a cost reflective tariff plan that is in line with the national standards
   ii. Develop and enforce credit and debt control policies.
   iii. Develop and implement a budget that shall link the municipal budget with indigent support.

b) The Municipality is looking at ringfencing finances specifically for water and sanitation services to use specifically for water supply and sanitation services related issues.

c) The Municipality will charge all households within its jurisdiction for all water supply and sanitation services rendered in accordance with the municipalities tariff plan.

d) Qualifying indigent households who are registered on the indigent register will be subsidised by the Municipality as outlined in the Municipality's indigent policy.

e) A comprehensive financial management policy will be developed by the Municipality.

10. TERMINATION, LIMITATION, AND DISCONTINUATION OF WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION SERVICES

Problem Statement

The Municipality is entrusted with safeguarding customers' rights by guaranteeing access to essential services within its jurisdiction. Yet, the disparity between customer rights and corresponding responsibilities has created a precarious situation for both parties. Challenges such as non-payment, unauthorised connections and vandalism by customers have severely hampered the Municipality's service provision. While customers are entitled to these services, they must acknowledge their duty to pay for them and refrain from tampering with water and sanitation infrastructure or unlawfully accessing these vital services. This disconnects between rights and responsibilities has led to a problematic scenario affecting both the Municipality and its customers.

Policy Position

a) Persons found to be illegally connected or reconnected to municipal services, tampering with meters, reticulation network or any other supply equipment or providing any unauthorised service associated with the supply of municipal services, as well as theft and damage to municipal property, will be prosecuted and/or liable for penalties as determined from time to time.

b) The Municipality will immediately terminate the supply of services to a customer should such conduct as outlined above be detected.

c) The Water Services Act Section 4(3)(c) states that procedures for limitation or discontinuation of water services must not result in a person being denied access to basic water services for non-payment, where that person proves, to the satisfaction of the relevant water services authority, that he or she is unable to pay for basic services.

d) Customer may terminate an agreement for the provision of water services by giving notice to the Municipality in writing not less than 30 days intention to do so.

11. CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Problem Statement

The implementation of Batho Pele principles has redefined the relationship between municipalities and customers, emphasising the crucial need for a positive and efficient interaction. Establishing clear and direct communication channels is vital for maintaining customer relations. The absence

of effective communication negatively impacts the Municipality's ability to tailor services to specific customer needs. Customer relations management fosters loyalty, trust, and satisfaction, potentially increasing willingness to pay for services, ensuring the continuous sustainability of service provision.

Policy Position

a) Customer service excellence shall be promoted through the promotion of the Municipality's core values and customer-centric culture among staff.
b) The current customer management system shall continuously be improved as a means of enhancing a positive mutual relationship between the Municipality and its customers.
c) The public shall be encouraged to use existing platforms to engage with the Municipality through customer care platforms for complaints, service delivery interruptions or other service requests.
d) The Municipality commits to resolve complaints and/or service interruptions according to the turnaround times stipulated in its Consumer Charter.
e) Communication and stakeholder engagement strategies shall be reviewed and improved in order to keep the public informed about all aspects of the services rendered.
f) Staff training and refresher sessions on customer care or focus and the related code of conduct shall be promoted and extended beyond just front-line staff but will include all staff.
g) Customer satisfaction shall be evaluated through annual surveys, the outcome of which shall be shared with relevant Stakeholders and made available to the public on the Municipality's website.
h) The Municipality shall continually build trust and transparency as a means of improving customer satisfaction year on year.

12. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Problem Statement

The Municipality continues to face escalating water consumption levels, which are accelerating the depletion of already scarce water resources at both the local and national level. The predominance of conventional waterborne sanitation systems, which rely heavily on large volumes of potable water for flushing and conveyance, further exacerbates this challenge.

These systems are unsustainable in the long term, particularly in the context of climate change, drought conditions, and limited bulk water availability. There is therefore an urgent need for research, innovation, and technological advancement to support the development and adoption of water-efficient and alternative sanitation solutions that reduce water demand, minimise environmental impact, and optimise resource recovery.

The Municipality should prioritise pilot projects, academic and industry partnerships, and research-based interventions that explore innovative water reuse technologies, dry or low-flush sanitation systems and digital monitoring tools to improve efficiency and resilience within the water and sanitation sector.

Policy Position

a) High-quality, relevant and focused research shall be supported in order to supply solutions to challenges faced by the Municipality and contribute to its vision by providing a platform to explore meaningful technologies, systems and other innovative ideas.
b) All research work done in the Municipality shall be internally coordinated and a database developed, managed and updated, as required.
c) Research studies done by or in partnership with institutions of research/learning shall be managed in accordance with related Municipality policies and agreements.
d) The Municipality shall not undertake research and product testing on behalf of a private person or institution that is seeking acceptance of its product.
e) All information and proof of performance required by the Municipality to measure the acceptability of a product must be supplied by the applicant at their own cost.
f) The Municipality may, however, wish to conduct further in-house testing on a product to either clarify or confirm certain data or information supplied by the applicant.
g) Once evaluated, should the product satisfy the minimum requirements, the Municipality may, in principle, consider the product for future use if so required, through the standard

procurement processes and subject to compliance with all applicable policies, by-laws and legislation.

h) All relevant policies and procedures shall be adhered to at all times.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION

Problem Statement

Climate Change and Water Security

Climate change continues to pose a serious threat to water availability and security, with far-reaching implications for both human well-being and ecosystem stability. Increasing temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns, droughts and extreme weather events are expected to reduce the reliability of water sources, placing additional pressure on already limited municipal water resources.

The relationship between climate change, water management and sanitation is inherently interconnected and reciprocal. On one hand, the impacts of climate change exacerbate water scarcity, affecting sanitation systems and service delivery. On the other, effective climate change mitigation and adaptation measures such as improved water conservation, reuse, and energy-efficient treatment processes can significantly enhance the resilience and sustainability of water and sanitation services.

Therefore, it is essential for the Municipality to integrate climate adaptation and mitigation strategies into its water and sanitation planning. This includes infrastructure upgrades, stormwater management improvements, resource diversification and the promotion of low-carbon, climate-resilient technologies to ensure long-term water security and sustainable service provision.

Policy Position

a) The Municipality will Mainstream Climate Change adaptation into planning and management processes.

b) The Municipality will develop climate change adaptation and mitigation plan.

c) The Municipality will use technology that are climate friendly, and water use efficiency.

14. INCEPTION OF THE POLICY

The inception date of the Policy will commence upon completion of the public participation process and subsequent adoption by Council.

15. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The implementation of this Policy shall be ongoing. The operational components of this Policy shall be contained in other policy-related instruments, including but not limited to, internal policies, strategies, procedures and plans. Where this Policy applies to other Stakeholders, internally and externally, the Municipality shall facilitate the interface required to give effect to this Policy and report progress to oversight Stakeholders, as may be required.

16. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The monitoring and evaluation of this Policy shall be against a set of key performance indicators that currently exist and, where applicable, those to be established upon adoption of this Policy. This Policy shall be reviewed and updated when operational challenges or legislative changes require this, but at least once during every term of Council.

17. REVIEW OF THE POLICY

The policy should be reviewed as and when the need arises.

18. POLICY DISPUTE RESOLUTION

In the event that a grievance arises with regard to the application and interpretation of this p**olicy**, it shall be handled in terms of the standard forms of construction contracts in South Africa, which recognize amicable **settlement techniques**, **Notice, Mediation,** Arbitration, as well as **litigation according to** the applicable laws of the Republic of South Africa.

19. CONCLUSION

This policy ensures the effective, equitable, and sustainable management of water and sanitation services within Bela-Bela Local Municipality. It promotes regulatory compliance, protection of water resources, improved service delivery standards, and stakeholder satisfaction in alignment with national legislation and municipal strategic objectives.

20. ENQUIRIES

All enquiries related to the content of this policy should be directed to the Divisional Manager: Water and Sanitation.

21. APPROVAL

The Municipality will follow its standard policy approval process.