

MERAFONG CITY LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



BP14 COST CONTAINMENT POLICY FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/2026

BP14 COST CONTAINMENT POLICY

Policy: Cost Containment Policy	Effective Date: 01 July 2025
Approved:	Review Date: 31 March 2025

1. SCOPE

The object of this policy is to ensure that resources are used effectively, efficiently and economically by implementing cost containment measures in accordance with sections 62(1)(a), 78(1)(b), 95(a) and 105(1)(b) of the Act.

Merafong City Local Municipality must revise and implement a cost containment policy, which is adopted by the municipal council as part of its budget related policies, and which is consistent with the MUNICIPAL FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT (Act 56 of 2003) and Regulations.

The cost containment policy must:

- Be in writing;
- Be reviewed annually, as may be appropriate;
- Be communicated on the website; and
- Set out - monitoring measures for ensuring implementation of the policy; procedures for the annual review of the policy; and Consequences for non -adherence to the measures contained therein.

Finances of Merafong City have been unstable for many years, and this was exacerbated by the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, there is severe pressure to maintain healthy cash flows and increase cost containment measure while sustaining efficient service delivery levels.

2. DEFINITIONS

A word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the Act has the same meaning as in the Act, unless the context indicates otherwise, and

“Act” means the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003);

“consultant” means a professional person, individual, partnership, corporation, or a company appointed to provide technical and specialist advice or to assist with a design and implementation of projects or to assist a municipality to perform its functions to achieve the objects of local government in terms of section 152 of the Constitution

“Cost containment” means measures implemented to curtail spending;

“Credit card” means a card issued by a financial service provider, which creates a revolving account and grants a line of credit to the cardholder

3. USE OF CONSULTANTS

(1) Merafong City Local Municipality may only appoint consultants if an assessment of the needs and requirements confirms that the does not have the requisite skills or resources in its full -time employ to perform the function.

(2) The accounting officer must adopt a fair and reasonable remuneration framework for consultants taking into account the rates -

(a) Determined in the "Guideline on fees for audits undertaken on behalf of the Auditor - General of South Africa ", issued by the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants;

(b) Set out in the "Guide on Hourly Fee Rates for Consultants ", issued by the Department of Public Service and Administration; or

(c) As prescribed by the body regulating the profession of the consultant.

(3) The tender documentation for the appointment of consultants must include a clause that the remuneration rates will be subject to negotiation, not exceeding the applicable rates mentioned in sub -regulation (2).

(4) When negotiating cost -effective consultancy rates for international consultants, the accounting officer may take into account the relevant international and market –determined rates.

(5) When consultants are appointed, the accounting officer must -

(a) Appoint consultants on a time and cost basis with specific start and end dates;

(b) Where practical, appoint consultants on an output- specified basis, subject to specific measurable objectives and associated remuneration;

(c) Ensure that contracts with consultants include overall cost ceilings by specifying whether the contract price is inclusive or exclusive of travel and subsistence disbursements;

(d) Ensure the transfer of skills by consultants to the relevant officials of a municipality;

(e) Undertake all engagements of consultants in accordance with the Municipal Supply Chain Management Regulations, 2005 and the municipality supply chain management policy; and

(f) Develop consultancy reduction plans to reduce the reliance on consultants.

(6) All contracts with consultants must include a fee retention or penalty clause for poor performance.

(7) Merafong City Local Municipality must ensure that the specifications and performance are used as a monitoring tool for the work to be undertaken and are appropriately recorded and monitored.

(8) The travel and subsistence costs of consultants must be in accordance with the national travel policy issued by the National Department of transport, as updated from time to time.

9) The contract price must specify all travel and subsistence costs and if the travel and subsistence costs for appointed consultants are excluded from the contract price, such costs must be reimbursed in accordance with the national travel policy of the National Department of Transport.

4. VEHICLES USED FOR POLITICAL OFFICE –BEARERS

(1) The threshold limit for vehicle purchases relating to official use by political office–bearers must not exceed R700 000 or 70% (VAT inclusive) of the total annual remuneration package for the different grades, as defined in the Public Office Bearers Act and the notices issued in terms thereof by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, whichever is lower.

(2) The procurement of vehicles in sub -regulation (1) must be undertaken using the national government transversal contract mechanism, unless it may be procured at a lower cost through other procurement mechanisms.

(3) Before deciding to procure a vehicle as contemplated in sub -regulation, the accounting officer or delegated official must provide the council with information relating to the following criteria which must be considered:

(a) Status of current vehicles;

(b) Affordability of options including whether to procure a vehicle as compared to rental or hire thereof, provided that the most cost-effective option is followed and the cost is equivalent to or lower than that contemplated in sub -regulation (1);

(c) Extent of service delivery backlogs;

(d) Terrain for effective usage of the vehicle; and

(e) Any other policy of council.

(4) If the rental referred to in sub -regulation (3) is preferred, the accounting officer must review the costs incurred regularly to ensure that value for money is obtained.

(5) Regardless of their usage, vehicles for official use by political office bearers may only be replaced after completion of 120 000 kilometers.

(6) Notwithstanding sub -regulation (5), Merafong City Local Municipality may replace a vehicle for official use by political office bearers before the completion of 120 000km only in instances where the vehicle has a serious mechanical problem and is in a poor condition and subject to obtaining a detailed mechanical report by the vehicle manufacturer or approved dealer.

(7) The accounting officer must ensure that there is a policy that addresses the use of municipal vehicles for official purposes.

5. TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE

(1) The accounting officer -

(a) may approve the purchase of economy class tickets for all officials or political office bearers where the flying time for the flights is five hours or less; and

(b) may only approve the purchase of business class tickets for officials, political office bearers and persons reporting directly to the accounting officer for flights exceeding five hours.

(2) In the case of the accounting officer, the mayor may approve the purchase of economy class tickets where the flying time is five hours or less and business class tickets for flights exceeding five hours.

(3) Notwithstanding sub -regulation (1) or (2), an accounting officer, or the mayor in the case of an accounting officer, may approve the purchase of business class tickets for an official or a political office bearer with a disability or a medically certified condition.

(4) The cost containment policy must limit international travel to meetings or events that are considered critical. The number of officials or political office bearers attending such meetings or events must be limited to those officials or political office bearers directly involved in the subject matter related to such meetings or events.

(5) The accounting officer, or the mayor in the case of the accounting officer, may approve accommodation costs that exceed an amount as determined from time to time by the National Treasury through a notice only -

(a) During peak holiday periods; or

(b) When major local or international events are hosted in a particular geographical area that results in an abnormal increase in the number of local and /or international guests in that particular geographical area.

(6) An official or a political office bearer of a Merafong City Local Municipality must -

(a) Utilize the municipal fleet, where viable, before incurring costs to hire vehicles;

(b) Make use of available public transport or a shuttle service if the cost of such a service is lower than -

(i) the cost of hiring a vehicle;

(ii) the cost of kilometers claimable by the official or political office bearer; and

(iii) the cost of parking.

(c) not hire vehicles from a category higher than Group B or an equivalent class; and

(d) where a different class of vehicle is required for a particular terrain or to cater for the special needs of an official, seek the written approval of the accounting officer before hiring the vehicle.

(7) Merafong City Local Municipality must utilize the negotiated rates for flights and accommodation as communicated from time to time by the National Treasury through a notice or any other available cheaper flight and accommodation.

6. DOMESTIC ACCOMMODATION

(1) The accounting officer must ensure that costs incurred for domestic accommodation and meals are in accordance with the maximum allowable rates for domestic accommodation and meals as communicated from time to time by the National Treasury through a notice.

(2) Overnight accommodation may only be booked where the return trip exceeds 500 kilometers.

7. CREDIT CARDS

(1) The accounting officer must ensure that no credit card or debit card linked to a bank account of a municipality is issued to any official or political office bearer, including members of the board of directors of municipal entities.

(2) Where officials or political office bearers incur expenditure in relation to official municipal activities, such officials or political officer bearers must use their personal credit cards or cash or arrangements made by the municipality, and request reimbursement in accordance with the written approved policy and processes.

8. SPONSORSHIPS, EVENTS AND CATERING

(1) Merafong City Local municipality may not incur catering expenses for meetings which are only attended by persons in the employ of Merafong City Local Municipality, unless the prior written approval of the accounting officer is obtained.

(2) The accounting officer may incur catering expenses for the hosting of meetings, conferences, workshops, courses, forums, recruitment interviews, and proceedings of council that exceed five hours.

(3) Entertainment allowances of qualifying officials may not exceed two thousand rand per person per financial year, unless approved otherwise by the accounting officer.

(4) Merafong City Local Municipality may not incur expenses on alcoholic beverages unless the municipality recovers the cost from the sale of such beverages.

(5) The accounting officer must ensure that social events, team building exercises, year –end functions, sporting events and budget vote dinners are not financed from the municipality's budgets or by any suppliers or sponsors.

(6) Merafong City Local Municipality may not incur expenditure on corporate branded items like clothing or goods for personal use of officials, other than uniforms, office supplies and tools of trade unless costs related thereto are recovered from affected officials or is an integral part of the business model.

(7) The accounting officer may incur expenditure not exceeding the limits for petty cash usage to host farewell functions in recognition of officials who retire after serving the municipality for ten or more years or retire on grounds of ill health.

9. COMMUNICATION

(1) Merafong City Local Municipality may, as far as possible, advertise municipal related events on its website instead of advertising in magazines or newspapers.

(2) The accounting officer must ensure that allowances to officials for private calls and data costs are limited to an amount as determined by the accounting officer in the cost containment policy of the municipality

(3) Newspapers and other related publications for the use of officials must be discontinued on expiry of existing contracts or supply orders, unless required for professional purposes and where unavailable in electronic format.

(4) Merafong City Local Municipality may participate in the transversal term contract arranged by the National Treasury for the acquisition of mobile communication services.

10. CONFERENCES, MEETINGS AND STUDY TOURS

(1) The accounting officer must establish policies and procedures to manage applications to attend conferences or events hosted by professional bodies or non –governmental institutions held within and outside the borders of South Africa taking into account their merits and benefits, costs and available alternatives.

(2) When considering applications from officials or political office bearers to attend conferences or events within and outside the borders of South Africa, an accounting officer or mayor as the case may be, must take the following into account -

- (a) the official's or political office bearer's role and responsibilities and the anticipated benefits of the conference or event;
 - (b) whether the conference or event addresses relevant concerns of the institution;
 - (c) the appropriate number of officials or political office bearers, not exceeding three, attending the conference or event; and
 - (d) the availability of funds to meet expenses related to the conference or event.
- (3) The accounting officer may consider appropriate benchmark costs with other professional bodies or regulatory bodies prior to granting approval for an official to attend a conference or event within and outside the borders of South Africa.
- (4) The benchmark costs referred to in sub -regulation (3) may not exceed an amount as determined from time to time by the National Treasury through a notice.
- (5) The amount referred to in sub -regulation (4) excludes costs related to travel, accommodation and related expenses, but includes -
- (a) conference or event registration expenses; and
 - (b) any other expense incurred in relation to the conference or event.
- (6) When considering costs for conferences or events these may not include items such as laptops, tablets and other similar tokens that are built into the price of such conferences or events.
- (7) The accounting officer of a municipality must ensure that meetings and planning sessions that entail the use of municipal funds are, as far as may be practically possible, held in- house.
- (8) Municipal or provincial office facilities must be utilised for conference, meetings, strategic planning sessions, inter alia, where an appropriate venue exists within the municipal jurisdiction.
- (9) The accounting officer must grant the approval for officials and in the case of political office bearers and the accounting officer, the mayor, as contemplated in sub -regulation (2).
- (10) Merafong City Local Municipality must, where applicable, take advantage of early registration discounts by granting the required approvals to attend the conference, event or study tour, in advance.

11. OTHER RELATED EXPENDITURE ITEMS

- (1) All commodities, services and products covered by a transversal contract concluded by the National Treasury must be considered before approaching the market, to benefit from savings where lower prices or rates have been negotiated.

(2) Municipal resources may not be used to fund elections, campaign activities, including the provision of food, clothing, printing of agendas and brochures and other inducements as part of, or during election periods or to fund any activities of any political party at any time. The outgoing Council to guard against over ambitious capital expenditure programme as this approach will undoubtedly be an unfunded municipal budget that threatens financial sustainability and service delivery.

(3) Expenditure on tools of trade for political office bearers must be limited to the upper limits as approved and published by the Cabinet member responsible for local government in terms of the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers Act, 1998.

(4) Merafong City Local Municipality must avoid expenditure on elaborate and expensive office furniture.

(5) Merafong City Local Municipality may only use the services of the South African Police Service to conduct periodical or quarterly security threat assessments of political office bearers and key officials and a report must be submitted to the speaker's office.

(6) Merafong City Local Municipality may consider providing additional time -off in lieu of payment for overtime worked. Planned overtime must be submitted to the relevant manager for consideration on a monthly basis. A motivation for all unplanned overtime must be submitted to the relevant manager. The Council to refrain from monetary payments of overtime to employees and substitute with leave overtime with leave days in order to contain municipal cost.

(7) Merafong City Local Municipality must ensure that due process is followed when suspending or dismissing officials to avoid unnecessary litigation costs.

12. ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES

Failure to implement or comply with these Regulations may result in any official of the municipality, political office bearer or director of the board that authorised or incurred any expenditure contrary to these regulations being held liable for financial misconduct or a financial offence in the case of political office bearers as defined in Chapter 15 of the Act read with the Municipal Regulations on Financial Misconduct Procedures and Criminal Proceedings, 2014.

13. DISCLOSURES OF COST CONTAINMENT MEASURES

(1) The disclosure of cost containment measures applied by the municipality must be included in the municipal in -year budget reports and annual costs savings disclosed in the annual report.

(2) The measures implemented and aggregate amounts saved per quarter, together with the regular reports on reprioritisation of cost savings and on the implementation of the cost containment measures must be submitted to the Municipal Council for review and resolution. The municipal council can refer such reports to an appropriate Council Committee for further recommendations and actions.

(3) The reports referred to in sub -regulation (2), must be copied to the National Treasury and the relevant Provincial Treasury within seven calendar days after the report is submitted to the municipal council.

(4) The Council to report on quarterly basis 30 days after each quarterly to Provincial Treasury by using specific annexure D.

(5) The municipality is advised to ensure appropriate monitoring and reporting on such cost saving measures is instituted for ease of reporting to management and council on progress on a regular basis. The internal audit unit of municipalities must be copied with such reports.

14. COMMENCEMENT

This Policy will take effect from 1 July 2025 over MTREF period in line with Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations