

Improving Service Delivery: A Namibian Local Authority Case Study

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Abstract

Local government assumes a fundamental role in the life of every citizen by providing services classified as physiological needs. Deficiencies in the delivery of such services to the citizens is viewed as a contravention of their fundamental human rights. The consequences of such deficiencies trigger frustration and unrest in the citizens, exhibited in political instability, damage to state property, and at its pinnacle the loss of lives. This research study investigated the concerning levels of organizational performance at the Arandis Town Council in the Erongo region of Namibia. The investigation was motivated by a need to determine the factors that affect service delivery, with the objectives to provide recommendations to improve service delivery and organizational performance. We employed a quantitative research method to collect the primary data for the study. An illustrative logical research configuration was selected, and data were gathered with the primary purpose to obtain a quantitative understanding on the topic. The data were processed utilizing SPSS version 25 statistical software to present the data in graphical format. In a bid to reduce inefficiencies in service delivery, certain recommendations are made to the town council for consideration. These include implementing a risk register, compiling a maintenance plan, applying for maintenance grants, providing training programs to its employees, commercializing the servicing of land and the development of affordable housing, developing additional revenue streams, and prioritizing the creation of employment.

Keywords: organizational performance, quality, service delivery.

1. Introduction

Local government plays a momentous role in community development and the delivery of services to residents. Local government services are categorized as physiological needs, such as the need for shelter or water. Local governments in Namibia and South Africa have reportedly failed to deliver services, leading to riots

and civil unrest. It is therefore essential to investigate the factors affecting service delivery and the impact on organizational performance. This investigation would prove to attract national and international interest.

The entity being investigated is the town of Arandis, Namibia, which was established in 1974 for the purpose of providing shelter to the employees of the Rossing Uranium Mine. To date, this operation has grown to be the largest open-pit Uranium mine in the world. The town was formally promulgated in terms of Proclamation 14 of the Local Authorities Act (No. 23 of 1992, as amended). The 2011 population census determined the population of the town to be at 5132 inhabitants and in 2020 it was estimated at 12,000. This figure reflects a 6% growth per annum in the population of the town, averaging twice the national population growth rate. According to Simasiko and Schutte (2017), delivering outstanding service as well as client satisfaction in a quarrelsome environment will remain a challenge to a service-rendering organization.

Public sector institutions perform under pressure to provide effective services because of citizen needs and expectations that are continually escalating and evolving. The Arandis Town Council was established in terms of Section 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia and was declared a town in 1994 when the administration was transferred from the Rossing Uranium Mine to the town council. The town council therefore assumed the responsibility for the rendering of the services to its residents since 1994. It must, however, be reiterated that the establishment of the town was primarily focused on the need of the employees and families of a single uranium mine. With two more mines added, additional support services to the mines and subcontractors to the mines were needed. This rate of expansion would, however, prove to activate an inherent risk, being that the service delivery requirements and capacities far exceeded the original planned capacity. In June 2019, the Arandis Town Council reviewed its 2014/2015–2018/2019 Strategic Plan, wherein it was expressed that the council only achieved 34% of its strategic objectives during the period under review. This means that the entity had failed to achieve 66% of its strategic objectives.

This discovery concurs with the sentiments of Simasiku and Schutte (2017) that public and state-owned entities are failing to deliver services in Namibia. In a bid to validate this phenomenon, we considered three of the mandates that are indistinguishable in all municipal council objectives throughout Namibia. This symbiotic relationship is the eventual result formed by the alignment of the entities to the country's National Development Plan 5. The mentioned objectives are the delivery of serviced land and housing, the maintenance of infrastructure, and facilitation of industrialization. The results showed that the institution being researched has a housing backlog of approximately 1700 homes, while countrywide 300,000 homes are required. The capital requirement needed to balance this deficit is 76 billion Namibian dollars.

As mentioned earlier, this objective is also a national objective in accordance with the National Development Plan 5 (National Planning Commission, 2017). The figures listed above illustrate that all municipalities throughout the country have been unsuccessful at achieving this objective. The next objective to be considered was the

attempt at the industrialization of the cities and the towns throughout the country. This objective proved to be similarly unsuccessful in the town of Arandis, as no new industries were developed for the period under review.

The first portion of this problem statement defines the ideal situation. In the ideal organization, a review would be evidenced by the organizational objectives being achieved. This study thus sought to investigate the factors leading to the adverse situation from ensuing or to underperformance of service delivery. The second portion of this problem statement contains the reality. The housing backlog identified in the entity under review illustrates that the entity has failed to deliver the first major objective of municipal councils, being the delivery of affordable housing and serviced land. A review of the entity's 2014–2019 Strategic Plan established that less than 34% of the organizational objectives were achieved. This situation falls short of the standard to be expected. The mentioned realities confirm that the current situation leaves much to be desired in comparison to the ideal.

It is notable that the factors that affect service delivery itself have not been broadly investigated, and neither has the impact they have on organizational performance. This indicates that a gap exists in the existing research, which this research sought to fill. The research undertook to provide proposed remedies to resolve this very important aspect that affects the standard of living of both the national and international citizenry.

2. Literature Review

This study endeavored to determine the factors that affect service delivery and their impact on organizational performance in the existing literature and to identify gaps in the existing research.

According to Zerihun and Mashingo (2022), the failures of service delivery in the South African Government are more visible at the local levels and are further long overdue. Furthermore, service delivery is a major problem in various municipalities. In Namibia, there is currently a national outcry about the appalling service delivery and the dismal operation of parastatals regardless of the large amounts of government funding they receive. History has shown that parastatals have failed to deliver quality services with most customers, sharing the sentiment that parastatals are underperforming (Scholastika, Schutte & Barkhuizen. 2017). A study conducted in the Limpopo province of South Africa on one of the municipalities reported that the key motivation for the study's compilation was the high number of service complaints in South Africa surrounding municipal service delivery (Mogooe & Muyengwa, 2021).

There is a general lack of transparency in all general functions performed within the public service. It has also been highlighted that political interference is a factor that always seems to be present in the functioning of local government. The factor of infrastructural funding is the first to be identified by the study. The municipal asset managers in South Africa have the unfortunate obligatory task of reducing budgets

for infrastructure operations and maintenance while placing increased pressure on said infrastructure. The considerations that the mentioned assets are a proponent for economic development are often undermined by other service delivery pressures.

Regulatory and policy factors have been listed as the next factor that affects service delivery. The guiding policy framework for the South African local government is the Municipal Infrastructural Grant, which is utilized for the provision of basic services, such as sanitation and water, to the communities within the municipal area. The study, however, illustrated that many rural municipal councils utilize the funding for alternative purposes, such as operational expenditure like staff remuneration. According to the study, the municipal infrastructure is aging rapidly. It has been found that municipal infrastructure at rural municipalities have surpassed their useful life by more than 10 years. Although the investment in infrastructure should hereafter have proved to be on an increased trajectory, conversely this has not proved to be the case, as investment in infrastructure has been shown to further decrease.

The next factor is performance monitoring within the local authority. This study showed that the problem that most municipal councils face in South Africa is the fact that they fail in the understanding of the current condition of their infrastructure as well as the capacity to monitor said infrastructure. Examples of this would be the lack of frequent inspections to the existing infrastructure.

The following challenge is incompetent human resources. This challenge relates to the fact that well-trained human resources will lead to effective service delivery, where poorly trained human resources will similarly lead to the contrary. It is essential to develop the capacities and skills of human resources for organizations to become more innovative and improve on the service delivery and by implication the organizational performance.

Poor governance was also a challenge identified. According to Mushaukwa (2018), community members indicated municipal officials taking bribes to provide services to members of the public. In addition, corrupt practices tend to undermine the sustainability of infrastructure and facilities, such as sewerage and water supply. These corrupt practices also lead to tenders being awarded to service providers that would provide kickbacks to certain officials who engaged in the tender process.

The next challenge to consider is limited funding. The study at Katima Mulilo Town Council indicated that the council has access to limited funding to deliver or provide for services (Mushaukwa, 2018). The study also revealed that residents of the town were not paying for services and owed the town council 70 million Namibian dollars for services rendered. This also stems from ineffective revenue collection methods.

The last challenge highlighted is poor recruitment practices. The study indicated that the council did not undertake sound recruitment processes and that they applied practices such as tribalism and favoritism. In addition, municipalities experienced political manipulation during the recruitment and selection processes.

3. Research Methodology

Exploratory practice was utilized in this study. This was done to determine the factors that affect service delivery in local government and its impact on organizational performance at the Arandis Town Council in the Erongo region of Namibia. The primary focus of the study was to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Exploratory research was selected to determine if, indeed, service delivery influences organizational performance. In this way, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables could indeed be determined as a result of investigating the factors that affect service delivery. A quantitative design was utilized with a questionnaire as the research instrument. The research population included the employees of six municipalities in the Erongo region, while the sample comprised the executive management and management members of the six municipal councils. To present the data in graphical format, the data were processed utilizing SPSS version 25 statistical software.

4. Results and discussion

In this section, the questionnaire results are discussed per questionnaire statement. The frequencies of the Likert-scale responses were tabulated and are depicted graphically.

4.1 Question 5, Objective 1

Figure 1 presents the responses to Question 5 under Objective 1:

The grants provided by central government are adequate to provide sufficient and timely serviced land.

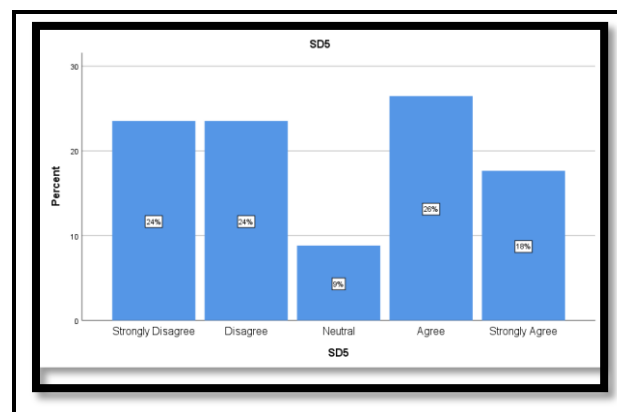


Figure 1: Land servicing grants

The graph above expresses that 26% of the respondents agreed with the statement, 18% strongly agreed, 24% disagreed and 24% strongly disagreed, while 9% were neutral. With the totals from the statement tabulated at 44% of the respondents agreeing with the statement and 48% disagreeing, the responses are in support of the literature reviewed in section 2. The review showed that funding allocated by central government was not adequate to deliver efficient services to the members of the public. This is further in line with the problem statement.

4.2 Question 3, Objective 2

Figure 2 presents the responses to Question 3 under Objective 2:

The municipal council is delivering sufficient serviced land to meet the needs of its residents.

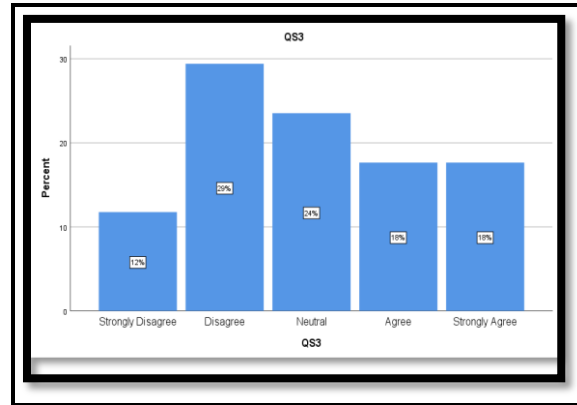


Figure 2: Sufficient delivery of serviced land

Figure 2 shows that 29% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, 12% strongly disagreed, 24% were neutral, while 18% agreed and a further 18% strongly agreed. In all, 41% of the respondents were in support of the literature reviewed in section 2 of the study and 36% were not in support. Serviced land and affordable housing are classified under physiological needs, as portrayed in Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Consequently, services that are anticipated by the residency are to be met, regardless of challenges that may or may not exist. Failure to do so would be viewed as a failure by local government and, in accordance, central government (Uysal et al., 2017). The problem statement therefore remains a relevant cause for concern.

4.3 Question 4, Objective 2

Figure 3 presents the responses to Question 4 under Objective 2:

The serviced land being delivered is being done timeously and affordably.

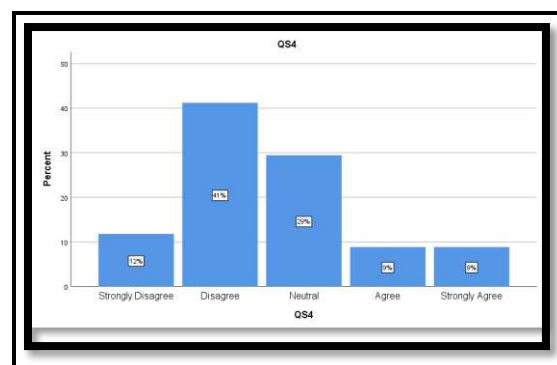


Figure 3: Timeous delivery of serviced land

The graph shows that 41% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while 29% were neutral, 12% strongly disagreed, 9% agreed, and a further 9% strongly agreed. From the responses tabulated it could be determined that 53% of the respondents were

in support of the literature that were reviewed in section 2 of the study, while 18% were not in support. The organization under review has reflected an average population growth of 6% per annum, while the growth in serviced land and affordable housing equates to less than 0,0003% per annum. This figure indicates a growth deficit and risk to the municipal council, the town, and its inhabitants. This failure is viewed as a failure by both local and central government, as presented in the literature review (Uysal et al., 2017).

4.4 Question 5, Objective 2

Figure 4 presents the responses to Question 5 under Objective 2:
The serviced land being provided ensures access to all public amenities.

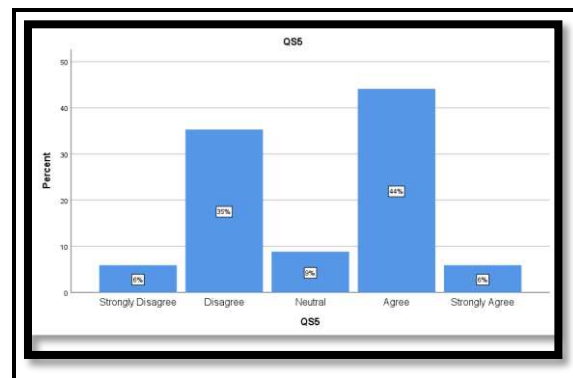


Figure 4: Public amenities

Figure 4 shows that 41% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, 12% strongly disagreed, 29% were neutral, while 9% agreed and 9% strongly agreed. From the responses tabulated it could be determined that 53% of the respondents were in support of the literature reviewed in section 2 of the study, while 18% were not in support. Public amenities are defined as facilities that are to be provided by local authorities or city councils. These are provided for use by the public and include public toilets, playgrounds, and community centres. The mentioned communal areas add value to creating a sense of community. The problem statement in this regard is highly relevant and require remedying.

4.5 Question 1, Objective 3

Figure 5 presents the responses to Question 1 under Objective 3:
The municipal council should apply improved risk management to mitigate its major and unacceptable risks.

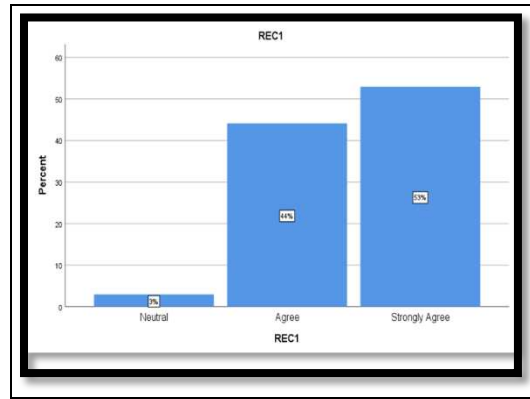


Figure 5: Risk management

The graph above expresses that 53% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 44% agreed and 3% were neutral to the statement. In all, 97% of the respondents agreed with this recommendation. Risk management in local government was not covered in the literature review in section 2 of the study or in any of the research in the prescribed timeframe. This area is therefore considered a gap in the existing research. Risk management considers the identification, evaluation, and assessment of the risks that face the organization. It then attempts to identify the risk that poses the greatest impact to the organization, that is, the risk that has the highest likelihood of occurring and has the greatest impact should it occur. Municipal councils should consider formulating a risk register and mitigating these risks in accordance with the assessment thereof.

4.6 Question 2, Objective 3

Figure 6 presents the responses to Question 2 under Objective 3:

The municipal council should consider all alternatives to ensure repetitive and preventative maintenance is performed on the municipal infrastructure.

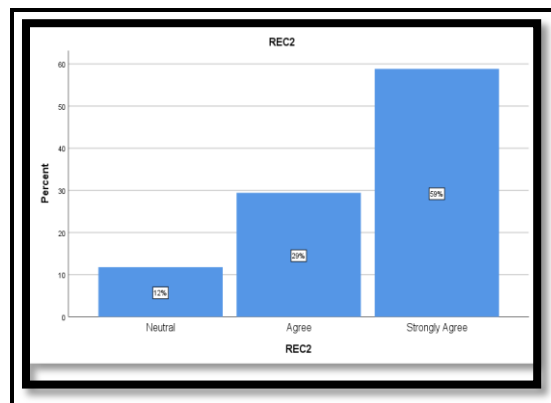


Figure 6: Alternatives for maintenance

The graph above shows that 59% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, with 29% agreeing and 12% being neutral to the recommendation. From the responses it can be computed that 88% of the respondents agreed with this recommendation. This is in agreement with the literature reviewed in section 2 of this study. The literature review identified maintenance as essential in its very

nature, with the different forms of maintenance required highlighted as preventative maintenance and corrective maintenance. Preventative maintenance precedes the breakdown of operational equipment and is done proactively prior to such event occurring (Zerihun & Mashingo, 2022). This question remains one of the primary concerns as per the problem statement.

4.7 Question 3, Objective 3

Figure 7 presents the responses to Question 3 under Objective 3:

The municipal council should consider alternative business models to that of the Cost Recovery Model.

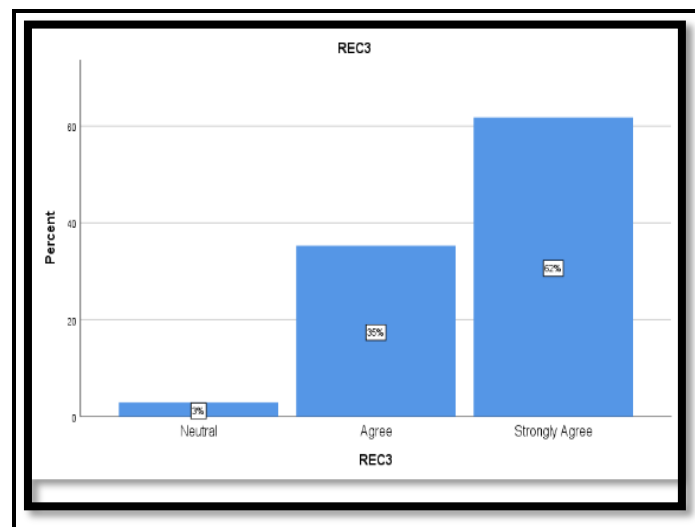


Figure 7: Alternative business models

The figure shows that 62% of the respondents strongly agreed with this recommendation, with 35% agreeing and 3% being neutral. From the responses it can be computed that 97% of the respondents agreed, while 3% neutral. The Cost Recovery Model as a business model in local government was not covered in the literature review in section 2 of the study and in any of the research in the prescribed timeframe. This area is therefore considered a gap in the existing research. The question attempts to provide an answer to the problem statement.

4.8 Question 4, Objective 3

Figure 8 presents the responses to Question 4 under Objective 3:

- The municipal council should continually improve on the human capital element in terms of technical and administrative capacities.

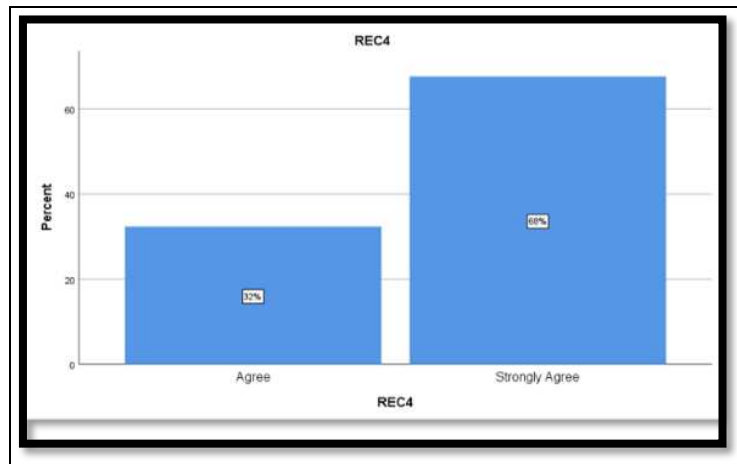


Figure 8 (Human capital)

From the graph above can be seen that 68% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, with 32% agreeing. It can be computed that 100% of the respondents agreed with this recommendation. The responses and recommendation are in support of the literature reviewed in section 2 of the research. The entity will only be as good or bad as its staff members.

4.9 Question 6, Objective 3

Figure 9 presents the responses to Question 6 under Objective 3:

The municipal council should consider alternate methodologies to attain financial sustainability.

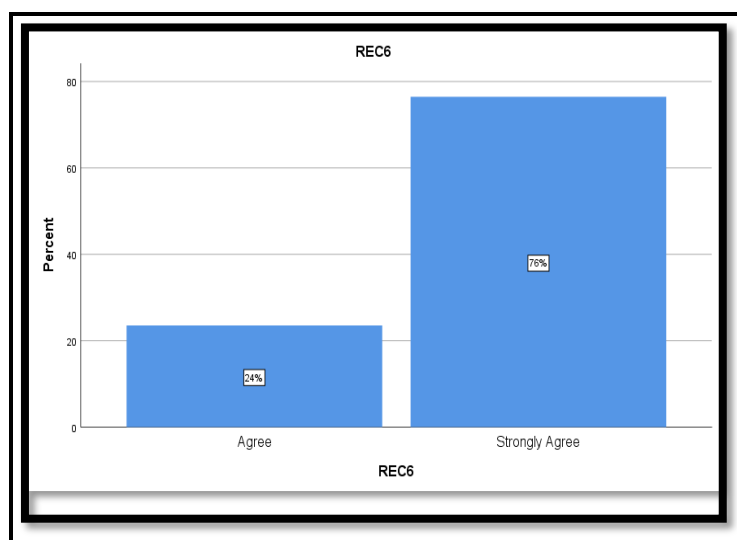


Figure 9: Alternatives for financial substantiality

The graph above shows that 76% of the respondents strongly agree with the recommendation, 24% strongly agree. This would state that 100% of the participants agreed with the recommendation. This statement supports the literature review compiled in section 2. It must, however, be noted that alternative methodologies to attain financial sustainability are not covered in the literature review contained in section 2 of the study and in any of the research in the prescribed timeframe. This area

is therefore considered a gap in the existing research. According to Hajilou et al. (2018), the lack of an all-inclusive application of the income streams of municipal councils in the form of macro-economic schemes as well as intercessions and amendments has placed undue pressures on municipal councils and resulted in the formation of unsustainable entities.

4.10 Question 7, Objective 3

Figure 10 presents the responses to Question 7 under Objective 3:

The municipal council should consider possible amendments to its business model.



Figure 10: Amendments to business model

Figure 10 shows that 44% Strongly Agree with the statement, while 41% agree, 12% are neutral and 3% strongly disagree. In total, 85% of the respondents agreed, while 3% disagreed. It must, however, be noted that amendments to the business model is not covered in the literature review contained in section 2 of the study and in any of the research in the prescribed timeframe. This area is therefore considered a gap in the existing research.

5. Recommendations and conclusions

This research paper has identified that a variety of factors will affect the delivery of timeous, quality, and effective services of local authorities in Namibia. Based on the literature reviewed and the primary data, it was concluded that the mentioned factors will have a positive correlation with organizational performance. The recommendations to the Arandis Town Council in the Erongo region of Namibia are presented in this section in broader detail.

5.1 Diversification of revenue streams

Based on the outcomes of this research and in terms of Section 94(A), (1), (b), (I) of the Local Authorities Act (Act 23 of 1992, as amended), the municipal council has the legal mandate to enter any commercial entity that it may deem appropriate.

5.2 Adoption of the practice of risk management as a principle

Based on the outcomes of the investigation, enterprise risk management in accordance with the King III and King IV reports is an essential component in organizational and cultural adoption, with full stakeholder involvement in this regard in the process.

5.3 Compliance with maintenance planning

Based on the outcomes of the investigation, the Arandis Town Council must perform planning for all forms of maintenance, including preventative, repetitive, and corrective maintenance.

5.4 The establishment of a commercialized entity (agency) that assumes the responsibility for the servicing of land and the administration of a revolving fund for this purpose

Based on the outcomes of this study and according to the Local Authorities Act (Act 23 of 1992, as amended), Section 30(1), (z), (ab) and in terms of Section 58(1), Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (2018), the municipal council has the legal mandate to commercialize any of its services. An example is energy services, which have been successfully commercialized. This is in accordance with public management and agency theories Hausken (2019).

5.5 The establishment of a commercialized entity (agency) that assumes the responsibility for the construction of affordable housing on serviced land only and the administration of a revolving fund for this purpose

Based on the outcomes of this investigation and according to the Local Authorities Act (Act 23 of 1992, as amended), Section 30(1), (z), (ab) and in terms of Section 58(1), Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (2018), the municipal council has the legal mandate to commercialize any of its services, such as energy services, which have been successfully commercialized.

5.6 Application to central government for the introduction of the weighted average cost of capital as an additional source of funding for the maintenance of municipal infrastructure

Based on the outcomes of this research, it is recommended that the Arandis Town Council apply to central government for the introduction of the weighted average cost of capital as an additional component to the budget of the municipality. This inclusion will allow the entity to hedge this additional source of revenue to cater for the refurbishment of municipal infrastructure.

6. References

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