

“Turn-around” at Municipality rewarded.

After a successful turn-around strategy since 2006, Theewaterskloof Municipality was selected as the top service delivery local authority in South Africa at the African Access National Business Awards ceremony in Sandton on 27 May 2010. Theewaterskloof Municipality's fellow nominees were West Coast District, Laingsburg and Overstrand.

Mr Stan Wallace, municipal manager, regards the award as “good news” for local authorities and government's focus on turn-around strategies for municipalities.

He stated that in 2006, Theewaterskloof Municipality was unable to render services properly due to political instability, lacking service delivery, insufficient community processes and participation, infrastructural decline, problems with housing provision, administrative shortcomings and insufficient revenue.

After the current council took over the reins in 2006, a turn-around strategy was initiated.

“The strategy pursued five objectives and resulted in political stability, sound corporate management, partnerships with the public and non-governmental organisations, infrastructure recovery and growth; and acceptable levels of service delivery”, Wallace remarked.

He is of the opinion that service level agreements between the public and the local authority have married the municipality's capacity to deliver services with public expectations and needs.

According to Wallace, numerous highlights occurred since 2006, but the most crucial were successful decentralisation of service delivery to town managements, service level agreements with communities, progress in rendering municipal services, developing an integrated development plan and linking thereof to the annual budget, development and implementation of a local development strategy, development of organisational readiness and expertise, adopting a credit control policy, drafting and implementing a communication strategy; and public participation in government processes.

Mr Chris Punt, executive mayor of the municipality, added that the authority has succeeded in attaining political and administrative stability and co-operation and that it is continuously striving towards improved service delivery and the optimal utilisation of service infrastructure. He thanked all political parties in TWK Council for the exceptional co-operation that exists in council.

“The turn-around strategy has ensured unity between political and administrative structures, as well as unqualified audits, progress in debt collection from 64% to 94%, economic development, job and wealth creation, extensive housing and the provision of basic services to indigent households.”

Punt mentioned that the award created hope for authorities who were in the same boat as Theewaterskloof.

“Successful local government is possible and government's focus on ‘turn-around’ is a positive step in raising the level of municipal management. It is however important that strategies should be realistic and practicable”, said Punt.