TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRINCIPLES AND POLICY ON THE WRITING OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE DEBT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The policy seeks that household consumers with no income or lower income are not denied a reasonable service and that the municipality is not financially burdened with nonpayment of services.

1.2 The Council is faced with a significant amount of outstanding debt and the continuous defaulting by certain consumers who can afford to pay for services.

1.3 Despite strict enforcement of the previous policies, Council will continuously be confronted by circumstances requiring the possible write-off of irrecoverable debt. To allow this, such as:

- The insolvency of the debtor, whose estate has insufficient funds.
- A balance being too small to recover, for economic reasons, considering the cost of recovery.
- Where Council deems that a customer or group of customers are unable to pay for services rendered.

1.4 The municipality will maintain audit trials in such an instance, and document the reasons for the abandonment of the action or claim in respect of the debt."

2. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the principles and procedures for writing off irrecoverable debt and unclaimed credit balances are formalised.

3. RESPONSIBILITY / ACCOUNTABILITY

3.1 The Council has the overall responsibility for adopting and approving the Policy on Writing off of debt.

4. POLICY PRINCIPLES

4.1 The following should be the guiding principles in implementing the Policy on Writing off of accounts: -

4.1.1 The policy is in accordance with the Local Government Municipal Finance Management Act 2003, Local Government Municipal System Act 2000, as amended and other related legislation.

4.1.2 Before any debt is written off it must be proven that the debt has become irrecoverable or unclaimed for a period longer than 3 years. To ensure that recommendations for write off are consistent and accurate, irrecoverable debt will be defined as: -

4.1.2.1 Where the tracing of the debtors is unsuccessful; and

4.1.2.2 All reasonable steps were taken by the officials to recover the debt.

4.1.3 Bad debt write offs must be considered in terms of cost benefit; when it becomes too costly to recover and the chances of collecting the debt are slim, a write off should be considered. The Municipal Manager and the Chief Financial Officer must review and present write off reports as prepared by Manager Revenue to Council for consideration and approval.

4.1.4 Time value of money is very important because the older the debt becomes, the more difficult and costly it becomes to collect. And the longer credit balances are left not refunded, the more liability the municipality will have. It is therefore imperative that a proper system of credit control is implemented and maintained to avoid debt reaching the stage of becoming too expensive to recover.

4.1.5 Differentiation must be made between those household consumers who cannot afford to pay for basic services and those who just do not want to pay for these services.

4.1.6 Debt can only be written off if the required provision exists in the Municipality’s budget and/ or reserves, except for credit balances.

5. <u>CATEGORIES OF DEBTORS THAT MAY QUALIFY FOR THE WRITING OFF OF IRRECOVERABLE DEBT</u>

5.1 All amounts outstanding by indigent account holders will be considered for a possible writeoff on annual basis.

6. Balances too small to recover considering the cost for recovery

6.1 Where final accounts have been submitted and paid by the respective consumer and the remaining balance after finalisation of any final readings and other administrative costs results in a balance, such account must be considered for a possible write-off.

6.2 The Accounting Officer or the Chief Financial Officer will, after thorough review of any applications in terms of this policy be delegated to write-off any amounts to the maximum not exceeding R500 000.00 collectively at any time during a financial year.

No council resolution/approval is necessary for such write-offs.

6. <u>Insolvency of the Debtor and Insolvent Deceased Estates</u>

7.1 Where a debtor becomes insolvent the Municipality will ensure that a creditor’s claim is registered in an event that the insolvency status of the debtor become known in time. Any amount not being recovered due to insufficient funds or if there is a risk of a contribution being made to an insolvent estate must, after notification is received by the municipality, be written off.

7.2 In case of death of the debtor a creditor’s claim must be timeously registered against the deceased’s estate, unless if the municipality did not know of such death. Any amount not being recovered due to insufficient funds or if there is a risk of a contribution being

made to a deceased estate must, after notification is received by the municipality, be written off.

7. Untraceable Debtors

8.1 Where for any reason the forwarding address of a debtor becomes untraceable or the debtor becomes untraceable from the current address, such account must be dealt with in terms of debt collection and credit control polity.

8.2 Any amount owed by a debtor that has become untraceable and is proven to be irrecoverable, must be written off.

8.3 In terms of Prescription Act 68 of 1969, the period of prescription of debts shall be three years in respect of any debt except property rates, which will be thirty years.

8. Special Incentives introduced by Municipal Council

9.1 Notwithstanding the Municipality's Credit Control Policy, a debtor may enter into a written agreement with the Municipality to repay any outstanding and due amount to the Municipality under the following conditions: -

9.1.1 The outstanding balance, costs and any interest thereon shall be paid in regular and consecutive monthly instalments;

9.1.2 The current monthly amount must be paid in full; and

9.1.3 The written agreement has to be signed on behalf of the Municipality by a duly authorised officer together with the account holder. The original signed agreement must be kept in the office and a copy may be handed over to the account holder;

9.2 Due to ineffective/ non implementation of credit control measures in the past, the majority of household consumers have accumulated significant arrear amounts and that these consumers are not in a position to pay off these arrear amounts in full together with their current monthly accounts. In order to improve the current payment levels from consumers the Council of Mafube Local Municipality may resolve to implement special incentives to address the arrear debt.

9.3 There will be incentives attended to in line with write off limitation. The incentive will be considered and a once-off discount will be given to the account holders settling their accounts

which are older than 90 days as follows:

9.4 For consumers who buy electricity and water from prepaid vending machines, the municipality shall limit the amount of vending for consumers with outstanding accounts and/or
take 20% (percent) of the amount vended to settle the arrears.

9.5 Municipality will also use electricity as the credit control mechanism whereby electricity will
be disconnected if other services are in arrears.

9.6 The schemes offer a rebate on the balance if only a customer requested for an arrangement of not more than six months to settle the balance excluding the current account as follows

Group of Debtors	**Method of Debt incentive** scheme - Cash basis (Full settlement)	**Method of Debt incentive** scheme – Arrangement basis
Residential consumers	For all residential consumers, a discount of 50% will be given with respect to all debt accumulated older than 90 days**.** Interest charged on the account will be written off. A prepaid water meter may be installed after concluding agreement.	For all residential consumers, a discount of 50% will be given in respect to all debt accumulated older than 90 days. The consumer will pay 30% at the time of the agreement in order to qualify for a 50% discount. A prepaid water meter may be installed after concluding agreement.
Schools	For all schools, a 50% discount will be given for all debt accumulated older than 90 days. Interest charged on the account will be written off. A prepaid water meter may be installed after concluding agreement.	For all schools, a discount of 50% will be given with respect to al debt accumulated older than 90 days. The school will pay 30% at the time of the agreement in order to qualify for a 50% discount. Interest charged on the account will be written off. A prepaid water meter may be installed after concluding agreement.

Churches and other NGO's (Not-for-profit entities)	For all these entities, a discount of 50% will also be given with respect to all debt accumulated, older than 90. Interest charged on the account will be written off**.** Interest charged on the account will be written off. A prepaid water meter may be installed after concluding agreement.	For all these entities, a discount of 50% will also be given with respect to all debt, older than 90. The school will pay 30% at the time of the agreement in order to qualify for a 50% discount. A prepaid water meter may be installed after concluding agreement.
Businesses	For small medium enterprises, a discount of 50% will only be given in respect to all debt accumulated, older than 90. Interest charged on the account will be written off**.** For big businesses a discount of 40% will be given in respect of the debt accumulated, older than 90. Interest charged on the account will be written off. A prepaid water meter may be installed after concluding agreement.	For all SMEs, a discount of 50% will also be given with respect to all debt accumulated, older than 90. SME's will pay 30% at the time of the agreement in order to qualify for a 50% discount. For big businesses discount 40% discount will be deducted on all debt, older than 90. Businesses will pay 20% at the time of the agreement in order to qualify for a 40% discount. **P**repaid water meter may be installed after concluding agreement.

In an event that the arrangement is made to pay off the debt, the municipality will not charge interest on that specific debt.

Interest will be charged on overdue accounts at prime plus 1% from 01 July of each financial year, and will be applicable for the whole financial year. Interest rate hikes or reductions effected by the Reserve/Central Bank during the financial year will not affect this rate in the same financial year.

9. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This policy shall be implemented once approved by Council. All future submissions for the writing off of debt must be considered in accordance with this policy. This policy should be reviewed annually for amendments if any.