

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF RECORDS  
MANAGEMENT WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO  
AMATHOLE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Noluvuyo Kanzi, declare that the work presented in this treatise is my own work and has not been submitted by me for evaluation at any other university. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the treatise.

N. Kanzi

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My late father and my mother, for laying a solid foundation for my success. This treatise is dedicated to my late father.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role played by records management in an organisation. The primary question that was explored was whether the management of records receives the attention it deserves at the Amathole District Municipality.

In order to achieve the research objectives, an in-depth literature study was undertaken. A survey was also conducted to examine the current records management practices at ADM and the data was collected by means of self-administered questionnaires. The literature study proved the hypothesis to be correct, which stated that effective records management plays a significant role in the effective administration of an organization.

The empirical study revealed that the records management function is not receiving the attention it deserves at ADM. Even though participants acknowledged the importance of records management in the decision-making process, strategic planning process (Integrated Development Plan), the realisation of the Batho Pele Principles and the overall performance of ADM, it was evident that ignorance was displayed with regard to the management of records. It has been discovered that Amathole District Municipality has a good Records Management Policy, Procedure manual and File Plan, but adherence to these policies should be continuously monitored. Regular training has been identified as one of the areas on which ADM should apply its focus to ensure sound records management.

Recommendations were made within the context of empirical survey findings and the regulatory framework for records management. To improve the current records management practices at ADM, it has been recommended that the records management function be incorporated into the organisation-wide strategic plans and that records management forms part of the key performance areas of senior managers.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADM	-	Amathole District Municipality
IDP	-	Integrated Development Plan
NARS	-	National Archives and Records Service of South Africa
NARS Act	-	National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act 43 of 1996
MFMA	-	Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003
PAIA	-	Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000
PAJA	-	Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000
PM	-	Records Management Procedure Manual
RMP	-	Records Management Policy
The Constitution	-	The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996
MM's Office	-	Municipal Manager's Office
EMS	-	Executive Mayoral Support Services
CS	-	Corporate Services
ES	-	Engineering Services
H & PS	-	Health and Protection Services
BTO	-	Budget and Treasury Office
L, HS and LED	-	Land, Human Settlements and Local Economic Development

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary responsibility of a municipality is to make sure that its citizens are provided with services to satisfy their basic needs. Leach, Stewart and Walsh (1994:5) define local authorities as service providers who aim to meet the demands, needs and aspirations of those for whom the service is provided.

Different pieces of legislation are in place to enable municipalities to carry out their mandate effectively and efficiently. Chapter 5 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 requires a municipality to adopt and implement an Integrated Development Plan (thereafter referred to as IDP), which serves as an instrument that guides and informs budgeting, management and decision-making related to service delivery and development in a municipality. In essence, the IDP is used by municipalities as a tool to enhance service delivery.

The ability of Amathole District Municipality (thereafter referred to as ADM), or any other institution, to carry out its mandate effectively depends on the availability of necessary and sufficient resources. Although it is always underestimated, information is one of the key resources in enabling the accomplishment of organisational goals. According to Van der Waldt, Van Niekerk, Doyle, Knipe and Du Toit (2002:129), information is a fundamental resource to both government and the private sector alike. Van der Waldt et al (2002:129) further states that information can be maintained and enhanced through appropriate records management. The National Archives' Records Management Policy Manual (2003:iv) (thereafter referred to as Procedure Manual) concurs by stating that sound records management is fundamental for good governance and effective and efficient administration. It forms the basis for formulating policies, managing resources and the delivery of services to the public. It also enables an organisation to find information easily and the orderly and efficient flow of information enables the organisation to perform its functions successfully and efficiently.

According to Dearstyne (1985), records are essential to the administration of local government. Records contain the information that keeps government programmes functioning and they give government officials a basis for making decisions, administering programmes and providing administrative continuity with past operations. Records also show the legal responsibilities of the government and they protect the legal rights of citizens (<http://www.eric.ed.gov/>). Records increase the accountability of the government and its officials. In summary, to support continuing service delivery and provide the necessary accountability, governmental bodies should create and maintain authentic, reliable and usable records (Policy Manual, 2003:iv).

Records play a significant role in a municipality throughout the stages of the IDP, namely, development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reviewal, and they are therefore an essential informational resource. Records management is based on the premise that records require managing, in the same sense that other local government resources need managing. Records should be regarded as fully important as other administrative functions since records are at the heart of governmental operations.

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele White Paper) was enacted in 1997 to improve the delivery of public services to the citizens of South Africa. The Batho Pele White Paper lays down a set of moral guidelines in terms of which public servants must do their work to provide services to the satisfaction of their customers (Van der Waldt *et al*, 2002:253). Sound records management plays a vital role in putting the Batho Pele principles into practice. For example, openness and transparency can be achieved by giving the public the right of access to information and this can only be achieved through sound records management.

In essence, sound records management is the foundation any government needs to provide services, to fulfill its obligation of accountability towards its citizens and to protect their rights (Ngoepe, 2004:1).

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The researcher is an employee of ADM and has observed that information or records are not regarded as an important resource that may influence the effectiveness of the institution. Although legislation regulating the management of records exists, there is ignorance on the part of certain officials, and that could have adverse effects on the performance of ADM and ultimately on service delivery. There is, therefore, a need to improve the management of records at ADM.

This observation has triggered the interest of the researcher to undertake this study, which seeks to create and enhance awareness and sensitise ADM officials of the fundamental role played by effective records management in fulfilling ADM's mandate.

The primary question explored in this research was whether the management of records, as one of the valuable resources, receives the attention it deserves at ADM. To answer the primary question, further sub-questions have to be explored which are delineated below:

- Does ADM have a policy framework for the management of records?
- Is records management included in the strategic objectives of ADM?
- Do the current records management practices at ADM comply with the prescripts regulating the management of public records?
- To what extent is sound records management impacting on effective administration in ADM?
- What recommendations can be made to ensure effective and efficient management of records?

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the study are set out as follows:

- To define records management;
- To examine the legislative framework regulating the management of public records;
- To critically analyse the management of records at ADM;
- To create and enhance awareness and sensitise ADM officials of the contribution of effective records management towards the fulfillment of ADM's mandate; and
- To recommend best practices of ensuring effective records management.

### **1.4 HYPOTHESIS**

The research moved from the premise that effective records management does play a significant role in the effective administration of a service oriented organisation.

### **1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following key aspects informed the literature review:

#### **1.5.1 SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATION**

South African legislation gives guidelines on what is expected of municipalities and how public records should be managed, for effective administration and management in municipalities.

In terms of chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, Section 152(1), one of the objects of local government is to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, Section 41(1)(c) stipulates that all spheres of government and organs of state must provide effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government for the

Republic as a whole. Effective records management enables municipalities to document the delivery of services and to promote accountability and transparency.

The White Paper on Local Government (March 1998) states that municipalities have a range of delivery options to enhance service provision and their administrations need to be geared to implement the chosen delivery options in the most effective manner and to ensure maximum benefit to their communities.

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele White Paper, October 1997) seeks to build a public service capable of meeting the challenge of improving the delivery of services to the citizens of South Africa. It promotes the application of the Batho Pele Principles by public officials in the execution of their duties. Lack of proper management of records may hinder the implementation of the eight Batho Pele Principles.

Section 56(2)(c) of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, requires the Executive Mayor to recommend to the municipal council strategies, programmes and services to address priority needs through the Integrated Development Plan. Section 56(3)(e) states that the Executive Mayor must oversee the provision of services to communities in a municipality in a sustainable way. Sound records management is the foundation any government needs to provide services.

In terms of Chapter 5 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems 32 of 2000, section 23(1), a municipality must undertake developmentally-oriented planning so as to ensure that it:

- (a) Strives to achieve the objects of local government set out in Section 152 of the Constitution; and
- (b) Gives effect to its developmental duties as required by Section 153 of the Constitution.

Records play a crucial role in all the stages of the IDP process, that is, development, implementation, reviewal and evaluation. Lack of proper records management may frustrate the entire IDP process.

The Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 was enacted to give effect to Section 32(1) of the Constitution, which gives people the right to have access to any information which the government has if they need it to protect their rights.

The purpose of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 is to ensure that administrative action is lawful, reasonable and fair and properly documented.

The primary object of the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA) is to secure sound and sustainable management of the fiscal and financial affairs of municipalities and municipal entities and to prevent corruption. Effective management of records contribute towards ensuring accountability and records are a key resource to fight corruption. In addition to this, Section 122 (1) of the MFMA requires that every municipality and every municipal entity must for each financial year prepare annual financial statements. The Accounting Officer is then required in terms of Section 126 (1) of the MFMA to submit the annual financial statements within two months after the end of the financial year to which those statements relate, to the Auditor-General for auditing. To be able to give effect to this legislative requirement, municipalities are required to maintain adequate and proper accounting records, and any other records that may be used as supporting documentation.

In terms of the Public Audit Act 25 of 2004, the Auditor-General is given powers to have unrestricted access to any document, book or written or electronic record or information of the auditee or which reflects or may elucidate the business, financial results, financial position or performance of the auditee. This statement illustrates the importance of sound records management when the municipality's financial statements are being audited. Many municipalities get qualified audit reports due to lack of information or unavailability of the required records.



The National Archives and Records Services Act 43 of 1996, as amended, provides for the proper management and care of the records of governmental bodies and the preservation and use of a national archival heritage. The mission of the National Archives and Records Service is to promote efficient, accountable and transparent government through the proper management and care of government records.

From the above analysis, it is evident that efficient records management practices are imperative to give effect to the provisions of all the above Acts.

### **1.5.2 SELECTED VIEWPOINTS ON RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

The literature study in regard to the study has been undertaken and it has been established that there is a shortage of academic reading in this field. Relevant books and other publications have been consulted to determine whether the envisaged research topic has not been researched previously. This exercise has revealed that there is no duplication in the study of the topic. Researchers have focussed on the advantages of migrating from a paper-based records management system to an electronic records management system.

Makhura (2005) highlights the correlation between proper records management and improved performance of an organisation to ensure competitive survival. The author further argues that records constitute the most vital resource and are essential for the operation of organisations.

Cloete (1998:285) refers to record-keeping as one of the auxiliary activities that are performed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency with which the other functions are performed or to make the performance of the other functions possible. This implies that by neglecting its auxiliary activities, an organisation may not be able to deliver on its core mandate effectively and efficiently. In view of that, records management should be given an equal status as other auxiliary functions because there is no organisation that can operate effectively and successfully without records.

Ineffective management of records can result in problems in the medium to long term when important documents cannot be found. Schwella, Burger, Fox and Müller (1996:181) state that information on the now infamous faulty O-rings of space shuttle Challenger, although available, was not used or dealt with appropriately. Neglect resulted in failure, loss of life, loss of equipment worth billions of dollars and the loss of payload launches through a long interruption in National Aeronautics Space Administration's space programme. In this example, it appears that the right information did not reach the right people at the right time.

According to Shepherd (2006:6), organisations use records to support accountability, when they need to prove that they have met their obligations or complied with the best practice or established policies. Accountability is a crucial aspect in enhancing service delivery.

Records support more effective and efficient business, underpin e-government and service delivery, help to demonstrate accountability, transparency and corporate governance, and are the source of information for citizens in the context of open government and freedom of information (McLeod and Childs, 2007:216).

Harries (2009:19) argues that achieving success overall is more than the sum of individual parts. It depends, very often, on a successful sharing of meaningful information between parts. Harries (2009:19) further states that a breakdown in the sharing of information between parts leads to a breakdown in service delivery. From these statements, it can be deduced that effective records management has a direct bearing on service delivery, and effective records management is a collective effort.

## **1.6 DEMARCATIION**

The study was conducted within the Amathole District Municipality, one of the six district municipalities in the Province of the Eastern Cape. The municipality is geographically located in the central coastal portion of the province and its area

of jurisdiction is made up of eight (8) local municipalities, namely, Mbhashe, Mnquma, Great Kei, Amahlathi, Buffalo City, Nkonkobe, Ngqushwa and Nxuba.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

There are mainly two types of methodologies used by social researchers, namely, quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The quantitative research methodology was more relevant for the study as it enabled the researcher to obtain relevant information from the sample group through a questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions. According to Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee (2007:44), quantitative research relies primarily upon measurement and uses various scales. Numbers form a coding system by which different cases and different variables may be compared. Systematic changes in scores are interpreted or given meaning in terms of the actual world that they represent. Numbers have the advantage of being exact. Another advantage of numbers is that they can be analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Bless *et al*, 2007:44-45).

Further approaches used in this research were a combination of the descriptive and analytical approaches. Firstly, the researcher described the records management practices at ADM. Secondly, these practices were analysed using applicable legislation to establish compliance and also contribution of records management towards the performance of ADM. The quantitative approach using a suitably constructed questionnaire provided additional pertinent information for purposes of the empirical survey. The questionnaire was formulated by the researcher working under the close guidance of the supervisor.

## **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:647), a research design is a plan or structured framework of how you intend conducting the research process in order to solve the research problem. This study was empirical in nature as it sought to address a real life problem and both the primary and secondary data were used. Primary data was collected through questionnaires. Books, publications, South

African legislation and policies were consulted for secondary data. The researcher used Amathole District Municipality as a case study to be able to do an in-depth investigation.

### **1.8.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS / TECHNIQUES**

Firstly, the research required a literature survey as the secondary data source to identify scientific literature and the research done on records management. Secondly, legislative framework regulating the management of public records, as well as ADM's Records Management Policy and Procedure Manual were examined to determine if the current ADM records management practices are in compliance. To this effect, public documents such as reports and newspaper articles were consulted. Other documents such as journals, books and relevant theses were also examined.

To collect primary data a questionnaire with mostly closed-ended structured questions was designed and distributed to selected respondents within ADM. The selection of respondents was based on strategic positions, knowledge and experience regarding records management.

### **1.8.2 UNIT OF ANALYSIS AND SAMPLING**

For the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis was ADM and the population was ADM officials from all departments as records management is a cross-departmental collective responsibility.

Two non-probability sampling methods were used, namely, quota and purposive sampling. Babbie and Mouton (2001:646) describe quota sample as a type of non-probability sample in which units are selected into the sample on the basis of pre-specified characteristics, so that the total sample will have the same distribution of characteristics assumed to exist in the population being studied. To ensure fair representativeness, respondents were selected from different categories, that is, senior management, middle management and staff at other levels not below Level 10. The reason for choosing these categories of

employees is their influence on decision-making (senior and middle managers) and their insight and understanding of the research topic, as these employees deal with correspondence daily in the execution of their duties. It was also ensured that a certain number of respondents is selected from each department within ADM, to ensure representativeness of all departments.

According to Bailey (1982:99), in purposive sampling the investigator uses his or her own judgment about which respondents to choose, and picks only those who best meet the purpose of the study. Purposive sampling was also used where officials who deal directly with records management were selected, as well as senior officials who can assist in making records management one of strategic priorities. This was aimed at getting as more relevant and valuable information for the research as possible.

### **1.8.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In conducting the study, the researcher adhered to the spirit of research ethics. Firstly, the researcher ensured that respondents' privacy is not invaded and that no harm is caused to participants. Secondly, the researcher informed participants that the research is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time. Consent forms were issued to the selected participants prior to them commencing with filling in the questionnaires. Furthermore, clear and accurate information about the research was given to participants prior to commencing with the research, that is, why is the research being conducted.

The researcher also ensured anonymity and confidentiality by not identifying the respondents. Respondents were assured about this before completion of the questionnaires. On the questionnaire, no space was provided for the name or any other form that identifies a person. Other ethical considerations such as plagiarism were avoided and the results of the study would be publicised in the form of a treatise.

## 1.9 DRAFT CHAPTER LAYOUT

- Chapter One - Introduction and Background  
The chapter gives a brief outline of the problem statement, research objectives and methods of investigation.
- Chapter Two - Literature Study  
Relevant books, articles and other publications on the topic were reviewed.
- Chapter Three- Records Management Practices at ADM  
The records management systems and procedures used at ADM was examined and their compliance with legislation thereof.
- Chapter Four - Research Methodology and Empirical Survey  
Research results and findings were presented and analysed.
- Chapter Five - Conclusion and Recommendations  
The chapter summarises the study, makes deductions and presents recommendations on the best practices of ensuring records management.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE STUDY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter intends to define the key concepts used in this study. The role played by records management in an organisation will also be discussed and the chapter will further examine the statutory and regulatory framework for the records management function.

#### **2.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

The following key concepts are defined hereunder:

##### **2.2.1 RECORD**

According to Agere, Lemieux and Mazikana (1999:16), a record is any medium in or on which information is recorded. Medium includes paper, magnetic tape and disc, microfilm, audio-tape, film, slide and photograph.

Cox (2001:2) defines records as an extension of human memory, purposefully created to record information, document transactions, communicate thoughts, substantiate claims, advance explanations, offer justifications and provide lasting evidence of events.

Shepherd (2006:6) defines a record as a recorded evidence of an activity, that is of an action undertaken by an individual or a work group in the course of their business, which results in a definable outcome.

Agere *et al* (1999:16) state that records can be classified into three (3) types, namely current records, semi-current records and non-current records:

- Current records are records which are in active use.

- Semi-current records are records whose use has declined and are used only from time to time. In other words they are semi-active.
- Non-current records are records which are no longer in active use and are being kept in order to fulfill other secondary uses such as legal and audit requirements or for research value.

According to Dearstyne (1985:14) records are created for some purpose and can have either a short term or enduring (archival) value. The value can be, inter alia, administrative, fiscal, legal and informational. Records with an enduring value should be preserved because they provide a framework for an understanding of the past.

In a nutshell, the concept “record” can be defined as the information captured for re-use at a later stage as evidence of an activity or action undertaken, and a basis on which future decisions are made. Records are important and it is difficult to imagine life without them, particularly in the running of an organisation.

### **2.2.2 PUBLIC RECORD**

According to Dearstyne (1988:13), a public record includes practically any type of information received or created during the process of official government business. This refers to paper documents such as correspondence, memos, ledgers, agendas and minutes, and deed books, as well as information recorded in newer forms such as sound or video recordings, microfilm, and computer disks or tapes. Other examples of important public records are gazettes, regulations, policies and procedures, reports including audit reports, strategic plans and many more.

The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Policy Manual (2003:viii) defines a public record as a record created or received by a governmental body in pursuance of its activities.

According to Dearstyne (1985:4), public records are public property owned by the people in the same sense that the citizens own their courthouse or townhall, and



funds in the treasury. Public records are held in trust for the citizens by custodians, usually the heads of departments in which the records have been accumulated, but sometimes by other officers to whom custody has been officially transferred by the governing authority. Public records may not be sold, given away, destroyed, or alienated from custody except through an official act of the governing authority in accordance with provisions of any state law relating to their care and disposition.

In essence, public records are as important as other public resources such as assets and finances, and should thus be awarded the same status as other public resources. What distinguishes public records from other public resources is that public records are not easily replaceable, hence proper care should be exercised on them.

According to Lemark's training manual on records management (2005:13), public records can be divided into four classes, as discussed below:

- Vital Records – which may include items like legal papers of the institution, title deeds, major contracts, property plans, minutes of certain meetings, insurance policies and others. These records should never be destroyed as they are essential to an organisation's existence and are often irreplaceable.
- Important records – those records that facilitate administrative and executive operations and may only be replaceable at great cost and with much delay. Examples are invoices, received accounts, quotations, financial statements, and others.
- Useful records – are those records that are required for short-term usage. Some examples of these records are memorandums and bank statements.
- Non-essential records – include routine enquiries, announcements and acknowledgements, draft notes from telephone conversations, and others. These records have a temporary value and may be destroyed after a short period.

The above analysis of a public record demonstrates that governments would come to a standstill without records which are, in effect, its institutional memory. All government officials depend on records from their own files for the information needed for day to day performance of their work.

Having outlined the four classes into which records are categorised, it becomes apparent that the values of records differ, from one record to another. The determination of the retention period of a record will therefore be informed by the value of that particular record. For example, a vital record should be retained for a longer period than a non-essential record.

### 2.2.3 LIFE-CYCLE OF RECORDS

The life of a record goes through phases starting from when it is created or received by the institution, through to its use, maintenance and finally disposal (www.docs.sa.gov).

The life-cycle of a record is illustrated in the figure below:

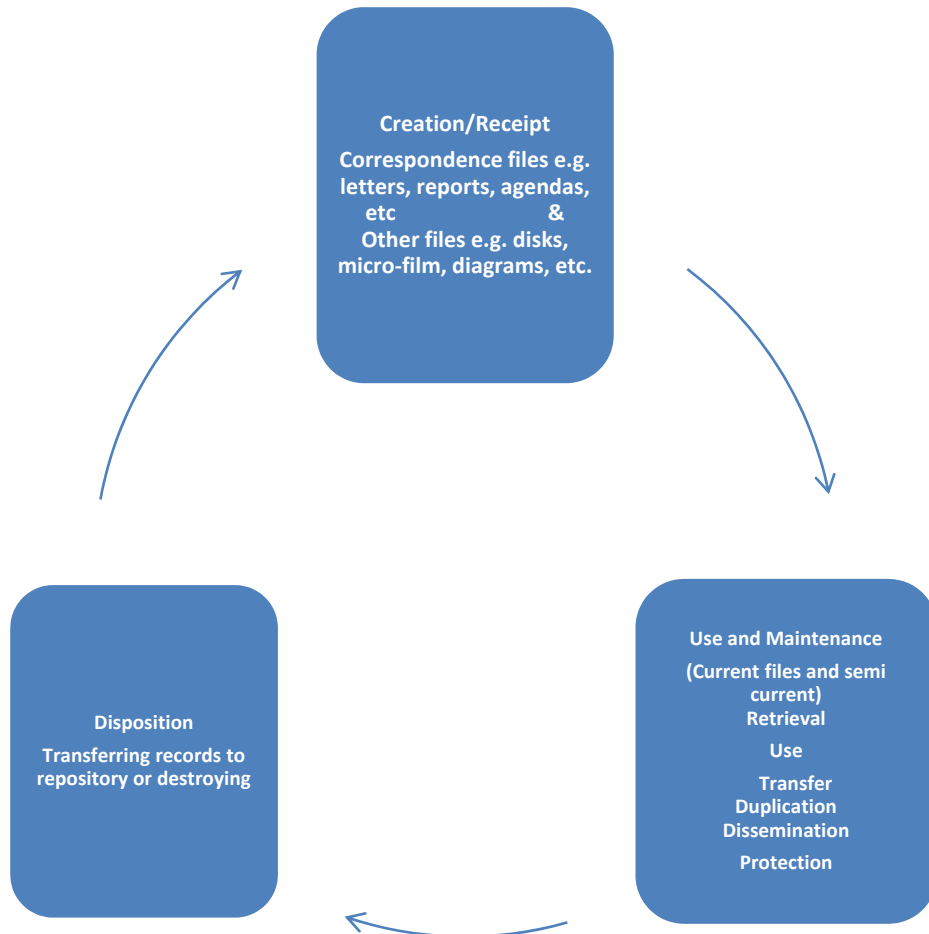


Figure 2.1 – Life-cycle of a record: Source: <http://www.docs.sa.gov>

The life-cycle of a record is a basis on which a records management system is made, as the system stipulates the procedures and processes that organisations need to follow at each phase of the record's life-cycle. According to NARS, efficient life-cycle management of records is a key concept in records management. If governmental bodies do not control records through the earlier

stages of their life-cycle, records that have low administrative value are kept too long and those of archival value cannot be identified and safeguarded.

#### **2.2.4 RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

As mentioned earlier, individuals or organisations create records to support the activities that they carry out. However, if these records are not managed properly, they will not provide the necessary support and information might be lost causing problems for the organisation. To provide an efficient and effective administration that ensures that the business runs as smoothly as possible, there should be proper management of records.

The National Archives' Records Management Best Practices Guide defines records management as a process of ensuring the proper creation, maintenance, use and disposal of records to achieve efficient, transparent and accountable governance (<http://www.national.archives.gov.za>). NARS further states that sound records management implies that records are managed in terms of an organisational records management programme governed by an organisation's records management policy. Records management is increasingly becoming an important instrument for good management, it helps any organisation to deal more effectively with information.

Agere *et al* (1999:1) define records management as a term used to refer to the way official records (correspondence, files, information) are organised in such a way that they have meaning and can be used continuously by the users such as managers, records professionals, educational institutions, legal authorities and any other interested parties.

Records management is the systematic and confident control of all records throughout their life cycle ([www.boababconnections.org](http://www.boababconnections.org))

According to Dearstyne (1985:6), records management is about overseeing the creation and use of forms, correspondence, and other records, setting up filing and indexing systems and other means of ensuring easy, rapid access to the

information in records; adopting and using modern technology in information creation, storage, and manipulation, particularly micro-film and automated data processing systems; microfilming of selected paper records for security, ease of access, disposition of the bulk paper records after microfilming, and long-term preservation of important information, and systematically disposing of records.

Dearstyne (1985:6) further states that records management is based on the premise that records require managing, in the same sense that other local governmental resources need managing. Records management should be regarded as important as other governmental operations.

Makhura (2005:9) states that the main purpose of records management is to manage and control the flow of records with the necessary information within a particular organisation.

Notwithstanding the different definitions of the term “records management”, the meaning underlying is the same. Records management is a way of looking at how records are created, used, maintained and ultimately disposed of. The objectives in managing public records are to make the records serve the purpose for which they were created as cheaply and effectively as possible, and to make a proper disposition of them after they have served those purposes.

#### **2.2.4.1 BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

According to Dearstyne (1988:10), the benefits of records management include the following:

- Records management saves money by discouraging the creation of records that really aren't needed in the first place;
- Records management reduces future costs by ensuring that expensive new equipment, such as microfilm cameras and computers, are not purchased unless these tools will help organisations manage their information much better;

- Records management saves space by removing inactive records from busy, crowded offices where space is at a premium, and sending them to storage, and by ensuring the timely destruction of records that are no longer needed;
- Records management saves time by ensuring that records are well organised and maintained;
- Records management promotes good governance by making it easy for programme administrators to locate and use information needed to monitor programmes, ensure administrative continuity, and make informed policy decisions;
- Records management protects the government by ensuring that contracts, agreements, and other records of the government's legal rights and responsibilities are securely protected, well organized, and easily located when needed; and
- Records management serves the cause of history by identifying and preserving important research records.

Shepherd (2006:10) states that records which are managed as part of an appropriate records management programme will help the organisation to conduct business in an efficient, accountable manner, deliver services consistently, support managerial decision making and transparent policy formation and ensure continuity in policy execution, management and administration.

In summary, an effective records management programme will ensure that records are available for use when needed, that privacy and confidentiality are maintained, that redundant records are destroyed and that records ultimately contribute towards sustaining service delivery.

#### **2.2.4.2 ELEMENTS OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

According to the National Archives and Records Services Act 43 of 1996, elements of a sound records management programme are as follows:

- **Appointment or Designation of a Records Manager**

Heads of governmental bodies should designate or appoint a staff member at senior management level to whom they can delegate the responsibility of ensuring that sound records management practices are implemented and maintained. This official is referred to as the Records Manager.

- **Records Management Policy**

Records Managers should develop and implement records management policies, which are endorsed by the head of the governmental bodies and their top management teams, as well as by the National Archives and Records Service. Adherence to these policies should be continuously monitored and the policies should be reviewed on an annual basis.

- **Records Management Procedures**

The records management policy should be backed by the governmental body's records management procedures, which are simplified to guide officials of an organisation at large on acceptable records management practices.

- **Records Classification Systems**

[i] File Plan – which is a plan by which documentation is arranged and stored to facilitate efficient retrieval and disposal. It also guides officials on how to allocate file numbers.

[ii] Schedule for records other than correspondence files – which enables governmental bodies to manage records other than correspondence, for example, plans, agendas and minutes, microfilms, diagrammes, CDs, and others.

- **Records Control Mechanisms**

- [i] Register of files opened – which contains a description and opening dates of all files that were actually opened according to the subject provisions in the filing system.
- [ii] Register of Disposal Authorities – which contains copies of all disposal authorities issued by the National Archives and Records Services, to that specific governmental body.
- [iii] Destruction Register – which contains information on the year in which non-archival records (short term records) are due for destruction.

- **Disposal Programme**

Records Managers should determine retention periods for all records, apply for the disposal authority from National Archives and Records Service and ensure that disposal authorities are carried out on a regular basis. Excessive retention of records will cause difficulties in retrieving records and will result in space problems.

- **Training**

Records managers and records office staff should be equipped with the necessary skills to enable them to carry out their functions properly. Records Managers should in turn ensure that all staff members of an institution are conversant with proper registry procedures and that they are capable of reading the filing system and allocate file numbers.



## **2.3 ROLE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN AN ORGANISATION**

The role played by records management in an institution is explored below.

### **2.3.1 PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Governments around the world are often praised for good governance or rebuked for bad governance ([www.baobabconnections.org](http://www.baobabconnections.org)). For an organisation to be praised for good governance, there are many contributing factors, of which availability of records and the effective management thereof is one of the critical factors.

Sebina (2004:45) argues that good governance is predicated on the adoption of functional records management and the enactment of freedom of information legislation by government. Good governance has eight (8) major characteristics, transparency being one of them. Transparency means that information is freely available and accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their endorsement means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easy forms and media. Management of records enables government to operate in a transparent fashion and the being able to account to the public who brought it to power. ([www.baobabconnections.org](http://www.baobabconnections.org)).

Good governance can only be realised where records management is functional or comes to play. In other words, for good governance to exist, citizens must be empowered to participate in meaningful ways in decision-making process and they should have a right to information. For good governance to be sustained, good records management programmes need to be introduced and practised. Information is crucial to good governance as it reflects and captures government's activities and processes.

Cox & Wallace (2002:67) indicate that open government is an essential requirement for good government. For this to happen, there must be a free flow of information.

Agere *et al* (1999:1) argue that the keeping of records and storing of information in an organisation has, in the last few years become critical not only for historical purposes but also, and more importantly, for current and future managerial and policy development. Records are being used as tools and instruments with which to understand organisations and as a basis for improvement. Agere *et al* (1999:4) proceed by stating that in reviewing the performance of the entire public service machinery, it has always been necessary to review the objectives, functions, rules and regulations, procedures and practices. The overall outcome of these reviews would be the development of organisational manuals, policies and procedures which would guide staff towards best practices and ways of doing things. These outcomes are to be underpinned by recorded information which is properly stored and with a potential of being retrieved easily.

According to Dearstyne (1988:5) records document the origin, evolution, and operation of government and show how it responds to needs and serves its citizens. Effective officials routinely consult records in order to plan, to analyse and track programmes. Good records provide officials with the right information for decision making.

Records have an impact on the administration and management of government departments. The forms and stages of policy formulation are based on the records that are available and retrievable (Agere *et al*, 1999:6). All policy processes, practices and procedures rely heavily on well-organised and managed information and records which can easily be retrieved for further use.

For good governance to be sustained, good recorded management programmes need to be introduced and practiced. For example, good management of procurement records, financial records and other records demonstrate government's commitment to promotion of good governance.

### **2.3.2 SUPPORTING DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY**

Lawton and Rose (1994:19) define accountability as a process where a person or groups of people are required to present an account of their activities and the

way in which they have or have not discharged their duties. Accountability can be linked to the concept of responsibility as one cannot be accountable to anyone unless one has responsibility for doing something.

Lawton and Rose (1994:19) further indicate that accountability can be achieved by:

- Compliance with the law and internal and external regulations;
- Fulfilling auditing requirements; and
- Response to challenge.

Records are clearly a key element in supporting accountability. In the words of Australian lawyer, Willis (2005), ... sound information and records management underpins ... many of the vital aspects of corporate governance (Orr, 2008:165). Management of records enables government to operate in a transparent fashion and being able to account to the public who brought it into power.

According to Shepherd (2006:6) one of the reasons for keeping records is that organisations use records to support accountability when they need to prove that they have met their obligations or complied with best practices of established policies.

Agere *et al* (1999:7) concur with the above sentiments by stating that for the instrument to be effective, it must have records and information available for the users to assess for themselves the extent to which the state is being accountable to society. One of the pillars of accountability and transparency in a democratic state is the extent to which people have access to information to assist them in evaluating whether the government is transparent or not. Hence the promulgation of the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000, which gives effect to the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, which gives the public the right of access to public records. The Act is an assurance that governance is carried out to reflect and protect the will of the people.

Cox & Wallace (2002:67) expresses a similar view by stating that accountability and transparency cannot be achieved in an environment where information is not available. Records management underpins accountability.

According to Dearstyne (1985) good record keeping ensures open government which, in turn, promotes more confidence in public officials and more accountability in the use of public funds (<http://www.eric.ed.gov/>). Information flow is meant to keep the public informed on government activities and processes and is presented as a measure of its comfort to account to the people who brought it to power.

From the above discussion, it is evident that information is at the centre of the relationship between government and the public. Without the availability of information, the public cannot understand how and why decisions are made on their behalf. Records are therefore reflective of the activities undertaken and the processes that have or are being initiated on behalf of the public, hence they should be properly managed. Existence of proper management of government records is an assurance that governance is carried out to reflect and protect the will of the public.

In summary, the importance of records management to the promotion of good governance and accountability cannot be overstated, the two would not have been that successful without available and accessible records and information which citizens can use as a base for their demands. To demonstrate accountability to its citizens a government relies upon policy files, budget papers, accounting records, procurement records, property and fixed assets, registers and others. Records management enables the public to understand the decisions made by the government, rationale for making those decisions and if the decisions address the pressing needs of the public.

### **2.3.3 SUPPORTING CONTINUING SERVICE DELIVERY**

According to the Worldbank (2000:3), the effectiveness and efficiency of the public service, generally, across the range of government functions depends upon the availability of and access to information held in records. For example, development projects are often difficult to implement and sustain effectively in the absence of well managed records.

Records document past policies, decisions and alternatives. By consulting the records, local officials do not waste time and resources by “re-inventing the wheel” when they approach similar problems and issues (Dearstyne, 1985:8). Implying that when records are readily available and accessible, delays in decision-making affecting service delivery can be prevented.

In terms of the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa’s Records Management Policy Manual (2003:2), governmental bodies should have ready access to the information they require to deliver their services to the public in an accountable manner.

Without adequate records, the effectiveness of development projects must suffer. There will be no means of verifying that funds for development are used as intended (<http://www.web.worldbank.org>). The public suffers when inadequate information systems affect programme delivery. Indeed, essential services such as municipal environmental health, primary health, the provision of water, all depend upon well kept and well-managed records.

Hence record keeping is of vital importance in the strategic planning processes of an organisation. The successful planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in municipalities, for example, relies on the availability of information and well kept records. The IDP sets out strategies, priorities, programmes and projects that need to be undertaken to realise the objectives of a municipality. These cannot be successfully implemented when records are neglected as records are reflective of the activities undertaken or to be undertaken on behalf of the public. Effective

records management in this regard eliminates duplication of services and ensures that all the communities get a fair share in as far as the delivery of services is concerned.

#### **2.3.4 FULFILLING LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

A well designed records management system helps protect an organisation legally. Records are one of the basic litigation support tools, without them there can be no litigation as they provide information through which evidence is derived and decisions are made.

Almost all organisations, including governmental departments, will experience some type of litigation during their lifetime. It is therefore imperative for organisations to devise mechanisms of ensuring their preparedness should a need to protect themselves in a court of law arise. Effective record keeping is among the many strategies that can be used by organisations to ensure preparedness for litigation.

If records such as contracts and agreements, essential for documenting the government's legal obligations to pay or receive monies are well organised and protected, they can be referred to when needed (Dearstyne, 1985:8).

The poor state of records has proved to be a hindrance to prosecution of corruption offences due to a lack of tangible evidence (<http://www.kacc.go.ke/archives/>). Corrupt officials sometimes arrange for files to disappear to avoid prosecution but where there are stringent records management practices, disappearance or loss of important documents could be prevented.

It is often noted that organisations incur high costs on litigation emanating from public procurement complaints brought by aggrieved companies. Keeping accurate records is therefore imperative to enable organisations to legally defend themselves in instances of this nature. Without information and relevant

documents, organisations will be defeated in courts of law and spend money intended for service delivery in court cases.

### **2.3.5 COMBATING CORRUPTION**

Corruption is a serious problem in South Africa, particularly in the public sector as it drains the state's resources and weakens the government's capacity to carry out its mandate of delivering services to the public. Hence anti-corruption measures should be taken to prevent corrupt activities by public officials. Effective records management systems play a fundamental and crucial role in combating corruption, as discussed below.

#### **2.3.5.1 Preventing Corruption**

Mnjana (2003:2) states that there is a direct link between poor records keeping practices and corruption. Mnjana (2003:2) further argues that among other root causes of corruption is the lack of good records keeping practices and failure by government to institute measures that will ensure records are well managed.

People always look for loopholes in the systems when they want to commit fraud. Effective records management practices are essential to ensure that there are no loopholes in the system.

Agere *et al* (1999:3) argue that the number of ghost posts in an organisation cannot be ascertained and the exact expenditure cannot be traced if there are no proper and accurate records. This statement illustrates that corruption will always be as a result of, inter alia, a lack of proper record keeping.

Procurement is one component of financial management where corruption happens the most and this can be attributed to the fact that most expenditure occurs here. It is for this reason that Visser & Erasmus (2002:169) indicate that one important aspect of procurement is that accurate records of all state store purchases and issues must be kept. Keeping of procurement related records is not only important for store purchases, but for day to day procurement and

procurement through bid processes as well. The importance of maintaining procurement records is central to avoiding corrupt deals.

According to the Sunday Times of 19 July 2009, gross financial irregularities were uncovered at Sundays River Municipality in the Eastern Cape, where more than R12 million went missing. Investigations conducted revealed that amongst other findings, no records for paid traffic fines were found. This illustrates that there was absence of effective records management control systems as the National Archives and Records Services Act 43 of 1996 prevents governmental bodies from destroying or disposing of records without prior written authorisation of the National Archivist. The Act also prohibits the removal of files by unauthorised persons. Records offices are required to be kept locked at all times and other officials are not allowed to enter the office. There are therefore cases where corruption could have been avoided, if records management had been better organised.

In the majority of municipalities in South Africa, those charged with governance and management often misuse their public positions by looking for opportunities to enrich themselves. The Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission website states that such opportunities for corruption are manifested through lack of regulations and guidelines, manipulation of records, poor storage and maintenance of records, loss and delays in records retrieval (<http://www.kacc.go.ke/archives/>).

According to the World Bank (2000:5), well managed records provide a cost effective deterrent to fraud and corruption.

From the above discussion, it can be deduced that the establishment of sound records management systems is a critical aspect in corruption prevention. To minimise corruption, government should redirect its focus to promoting good records management practices as one of the corruption prevention strategies, instead of pumping its resources on investigating and detecting corruption. This would make a significant difference as there would be less corruption cases to investigate when records are well-managed. Prevention is better than cure and much cheaper than prosecution.



### **2.3.5.2 Facilitating smooth investigations by anti-corruption institutions**

In its efforts to combat corruption, government established a number of anti-corruption institutions in terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996. The Office of the Auditor-General, Office of the Public Protector and the Public Service Commission, to name a few examples. These institutions are assigned with the responsibility of investigating, detecting and fighting corruption, as well as promoting ethics. The government's efforts are always directed towards strengthening these institutions. Surprisingly, little attention is being paid to the fact that the success of these institutions depends on the accessibility to complete, reliable and accurate records.

Auditors, for example, establish whether proper processes were followed in expending public monies, that is, whether there is supporting documentation for the purchasing of goods and services and adherence to applicable legislation and policies. Without good records meaningful audits cannot be carried out as the records are the source of the information required by the Auditors.

An effective records management system ensures that the audit function and external accountability of the organisation is supported (<http://findarticles.com/>).

Palmer (2000:65) states that the role of a records management system is that it acts as a control system that reinforces other control systems such as internal and external auditing. The records themselves can serve to detect fraud and recover the loss. For example, discrepancies can be detected mostly in the process of scrutinising records. Since corruption creates an environment that allows opportunities to commit fraud, once fraud is detected, records can provide a trail for investigations to track the root of corruption. However, for records to be useful in this capacity, they must be well managed and accessible.

### **2.3.5.3 Providing Evidence**

Where public figures or civil servants are under scrutiny for breaches of systems or regulations or even corruption, much of the evidence will be provided by records.

According to Palmer (2000:65), authentic and reliable records can serve as evidence to identify abuse, misuse and non-compliance with financial institutions and other laws and regulations.

Mnjama (2003:3) states that the value of state records derives, among others, from the information they contain and evidence they provide. Records provide verifiable evidence to fraud that can lead investigators to the root cause of corruption.

The Kenya Anti-corruption Commission website the poor state of records has proved to be a hindrance to prosecution of corruption offences due to a lack of tangible evidence (<http://www.kacc.go.ke/archives/>).

Many corruption cases are thrown out of the courts because of a lack of evidence. This can be attributed to a lack of effective records management systems. Records therefore play a vital role in providing evidence in corruption related cases, provided that they are readily accessible, accurate, authentic and reliable. These can only be achieved when there are sound records management systems.

### **2.3.6 PROMOTING AND PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS**

According to Mnjama (2003:3), state records not only document past decisions, they often establish and protect the current rights and responsibilities of both the government and the governed.

The Worldbank shares the same view by stating that records document the fundamental rights of communities and obligations of government ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)).

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 and the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000, the right of access to information serves to advance human rights. The Acts actively promote a society in which the people of South Africa have effective access to information to enable them to more fully exercise and protect all of their rights. A notable example is Caster Semenya's case, whose lawyers according to the Sunday Times (27 September, 2009) requested transcripts of recordings of an Athletics South Africa meeting, in line with the provisions of the Promotion of Access to Information Act. This emanated from the fact that Semenya, a South African athlete, was subjected to gender testing after winning a gold medal for the women's 800m race in Berlin. The results which confirmed that Semenya was a "hermaphrodite" were subsequently publicised. Semenya's lawyers believed that Semenya's human rights were violated in that the manner in which the matter was handled led to Semenya's dignity being tarnished.

This example demonstrates the importance of records in the protection of human rights, without them there can be no evidence proving violation of rights.

According to the World Bank (2000:4), the ability of governments to protect the rights of its citizens and to improve citizen-government interaction is a critical issue. The rights and entitlements of citizens are based on records, and the ability of a government to continue to respect these rights and entitlements is based on the quality of the policies, standards, and practices employed for the care of those records. For example, in municipalities a certain category of

citizens are regarded as indigent and therefore qualify for free basic water. The information as to who is entitled to this free basic water is contained in the records kept by the Municipalities, whether manually or electronically.

### **2.3.7 ENSURING SOUND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

Finance and audit laws generally require ministries and departments to ensure that financial and accounting records are adequately kept and managed and to empower the audit body to obtain access to all financial records (<http://findarticles.com/>). The Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 requires municipalities to prepare annual financial statements within two months after the end of the financial year to which the statements relate, and submit them to the Office of the Auditor General. An effective records management system is a critical element in the preparation of an institution's financial statements. It will allow for verification of the completeness and accuracy of data reported in financial statements and assist in the compilation of the audit process.

An effective records management system should ensure that financial records are maintained throughout the life cycle in a consistent and structured manner, that the audit function and external accountability of the organisation is supported, that the organisation is able to meet its obligations under legislation and to access records for fiscal policy and planning purposes, that the integrity and accuracy of the records are protected and that the records can be retrieved (<http://findarticles.com/>).

It is now widely recognised that improvements in the management of government finance are essential to bring a halt to the global escalation of corruption. Yet, unless the records resulting from the conduct of financial management activities are managed effectively, this goal cannot be achieved (<http://findarticles.com/>).

The World Bank (2000:6) states that poor record keeping affects the entire accounting function, with the result that reporting and auditing may become virtually impossible. Fraud becomes difficult to detect and debt management also suffers.

Good records management systems are therefore essential to support financial management.

## **2.4 STATUTORY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

In South Africa a legal framework exist for both public and private bodies to have effective control and management of their records and to be able to make information available when required. Statutory bodies were also established to ensure proper management and care of records and accessibility of the public to the records to protect their rights. Examples of such bodies are the Human Rights Commission which should ensure that mechanisms are put in place for the public to exercise their constitutional right of access to information held by the public and private bodies, and the National Archives and Records Services which is assigned with the responsibility of ensuring proper care and management of records by public bodies (<http://www.sahrc.org.za> and the NARS Act 43 of 1996).

### **2.4.1 CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, ACT 108 OF 1996**

Section 32(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (thereafter referred to as the 1996 Constitution) states that everyone has the right of access to information held by the state or held by another person when that information is required for the exercise or protection of any right. This clause demonstrates the importance of records management to protect human rights as information can only be accessed when there is a sound records management system. Section 32(2) of the 1996 Constitution culminated in the promulgation of the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 as it provides that national legislation be enacted to give effect to this right.

In terms of Section 41(1)(c) of the 1996 Constitution, all spheres of government and all organs of state must provide effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government for the Republic as a whole. Section 95(1)(f) requires governmental bodies to grant access to the Office of the Auditor-General to

information on the financial transactions entered into in order to give account to taxpayers. As already discussed, accountability and transparency can only happen if the public, to which governmental bodies are accountable, has ready access to all information that underpins the decision-making processes. It can also happen if the Office of the Auditor-General, or any other governmental body that plays a guardian or watchdog role, has ready access to information on the transactions entered into by government.

#### **2.4.2 PROMOTION OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT NO. 2 OF 2000 (PAIA)**

The above-mentioned Act gives effect to the constitutional right of access to any information held by public or private bodies, and which is required for the exercise or protection of any rights. The Act seeks to foster a culture of transparency and accountability in public and private bodies. It is also empowering and educating the public to understand and exercise their rights, to understand the functions and operations of public bodies and to effectively scrutinise and participate in decision-making by public bodies that affect their rights.

In accordance with Sections 14(1) to (4) and 5(1) to (4) of the PAIA, the information officers of all public and private bodies are required to compile a manual containing all the details of the body. The manual should categorise all the records held by a particular body and spell out the procedures that need to be followed by the public to access the records. Public and private bodies are further required to update this manual on a regular basis and make it available when requested. As this Act impacts on the protection of rights of the public, Information Officers are required to report annually to the South African Human Rights Commission with statistical data relating to the number of requests accepted and/or rejected. The South African Human Commission was assigned with the task of monitoring the implementation of this Act and recommending best practices to Parliament. The Commission must also assist persons and public/private bodies wherever possible (PAIA, 2 of 2000).

In terms of the above Act, public and private bodies are required to disclose information of public interest and provide records, which could reveal substantial contravention of, or failure to comply with the law; or where the information relates to imminent and serious public safety or environment risks; or where the public's interest outweighs the harm. (Source)

For an effective and practical implementation of this Act, there should be easy access to records and this can only be possible where there are sound records management practices.

#### **2.4.3 PROMOTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE ACT 3 OF 2000**

The right to just administrative action is entrenched in the Bill of Rights, Section 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 (hereafter referred to as PAJA) was promulgated to give effect to the rights mentioned in subsections (1) and (2) of the Constitution, which are: (1) the right to administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair, and (2) when a person's rights have been adversely affected by such action, the right to be given written reasons.

Section 4(2)(b)(iii) of PAJA requires an administrator to compile a written report on the inquiry and give reasons for any administrative action taken or recommended.

The availability of authentic and accurate records plays a vital role in ensuring fair and reasonable administrative action against persons and the public, as they are produced as evidence in such cases. Essentially, to ensure compliance with PAJA, governmental bodies should keep proper records of administrative actions and decisions.

#### **2.4.4 NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICES OF SOUTH AFRICA ACT 43 OF 1996**

The above-mentioned Act provides for the establishment of the National Archives and Records Services (NARS) which is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring proper management and care of public records and preservation and use of national archival heritage. The National Archivist in particular is charged with this responsibility.

In terms of Section 3 the NARS shall:

- (c) ensure the proper management and care of all public records; and
- (h) promote an awareness of archives and records management, and encourage archival and records management activities.

Section 13(2)(a) of the Act stipulates that no public record under the control of a governmental body shall be transferred to an archives repository, destroyed, erased or otherwise disposed of without the written authorisation of the National Archivist.

In accordance with Section 13(5) of Act 43 of 1996, the head of a governmental body shall, subject to any law governing the employment of personnel of the governmental body concerned and such requirements as may be prescribed, designate an official of the body to be the Records Manager of the body. The Records Manager is responsible for the overall control and management of records.

If Records Managers can perform their duties diligently and effectively, records would be correctly filed and easily accessible, and that would facilitate transparency, accountability and democracy. Further to that, controls would be exercised to ensure that only authorised persons have access to the information, thus preventing information and/or the records from being stolen or damaged. This will ultimately lead to the eradication of corruption and fraud.



#### **2.4.5 MUNICIPAL FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT 56 OF 2003**

According to the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 the objective of this Act is to secure sound and sustainable management of the financial and fiscal affairs of municipalities and other institutions in the local sphere of government. The Act seeks to ensure that financial resources are directed at promoting the general welfare, thereby preventing corruption and fraud.

In accordance with Section 61(2)(b) of Act 56 of 2003, an accounting officer may not use the position or privileges of, or confidential information obtained as, accounting officer for personal gain or to improperly benefit another person. Effective records management contributes towards combating corruption and fraud.

Section 62(b) of the Act urges municipalities to take reasonable steps to ensure that full and proper records of the financial affairs of the municipality are kept in accordance with any prescribed norms and standards. Poor financial record keeping creates opportunities for fraud, leads to loss of revenue, impedes fiscal planning and hinders the delivery of services to the public.

The Accounting Officer is required to submit reports on, amongst others, asset and liability management, revenue management, expenditure management, on funds transferred to organisations and bodies outside government and irregular or fruitless and wasteful expenditure. Without well-kept records this requirement cannot be fulfilled.

Section 112(1)(m) stipulates that measures should be taken for (i) combating fraud, corruption, favouritism and unfair and irregular practices in municipal supply chain management; and (ii) promoting ethics of officials and other role players involved in municipal supply chain management. Corrupt activities in supply chain management could be prevented when records are well managed.

Sections 121(1) and 122(1) require municipalities to prepare and adopt annual reports and financial statements, respectively. Availability of records is

fundamental to fulfilling this requirement as records provide evidence of actions and decisions taken.

In terms of Section 149 of the Act, if a provincial executive intervenes in terms of section 139 of the Constitution, the provincial executive and its representatives have access to such information, records and documents of the municipality. This section demonstrates the importance of records in determining the past activities, the current state of affairs and what course of action need to be taken. Records serve as a guideline and direction to officials, whether they are old or new in an organisation.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

From the above discussions, it can be deduced that records are inextricable entwined with increased transparency, accountability and good governance. It also became apparent that fraud cannot be proven, meaningful audits cannot be carried out and government actions are not open to review when records are not well managed. Records provide verifiable evidence of fraud and can lead investigators to the root cause of corruption. Sound records management is therefore at the centre of increased accountability and good governance, it is one of the best weapons in fighting corruption, it plays a vital role in the advancement of human rights and contribute towards ensuring sound financial management. Records should therefore be managed in the same manner that the other organisational resources, such as finance and staff, are managed.

Furthermore, the discussion has revealed that sound records management is not a choice, but compulsory as it is regulated by legislation. Advocating the management of records as an organisational and societal benefit is therefore not an activity to be taken for granted. Ignorance on records management can have adverse effects to the organisation's performance and can drain financial resources, and that will ultimately affect service delivery.

In the chapter that follows, a critical analysis of Amathole District Municipality's records management practices will be done. The main purpose for this critical analysis is to establish whether records management at ADM is receiving the attention it deserves. The research will examine the current record keeping and records management practices at ADM against the legislative framework regulating the management of public records.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT AMATHOLE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Amathole District Municipality (ADM), is one of the six Category C (District) Municipalities in the Province of the Eastern Cape, established in terms of Section 155(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, and Section 3 of the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998. ADM is situated on the coast of the central Eastern Cape and it comprises of eight Category B (Local) Municipalities under its area of jurisdiction namely, Mbhashe, Mnquma, Great Kei, Amahlathi, Buffalo City, Nkonkobe, Ngqushwa and Nxuba Local Municipalities.

The core functions assigned to ADM in terms of the powers and functions as entailed in Chapter 5 of the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, as amended, are the provision of water and sanitation services and provision of municipal health services. All other functions performed by ADM are either support services or services performed on behalf of local municipalities due to incapacity problems, as well as agency functions performed on behalf of other spheres of government, for example, primary health care which is rendered on behalf of the Eastern Cape Department of Health. The administration head at ADM is the Municipal Manager who is accountable to the Executive Mayor and council. ADM is comprised of six (6) distinct departments headed by directors.

The organizational structure is outlined in the subsequent page:



**Figure 3.1: ADM's Organisational Structure (Information downloaded from ADM's website: <http://www.amathole.gov.za>)**

In relation to the illustration on the previous page, the vision of ADM is as follows:

“A leading, dynamic, innovative, pioneering and focused district municipality dedicated to servicing the needs of our communities and their social and economic development.”

In terms of its mission, Amathole District Municipality is dedicated to contributing to the betterment of its communities' lives through a participatory development process to ensure they have access to socio-economic opportunities. ADM is dedicated to enhancing its communities' lives through partnership-building and co-operation with relevant stakeholders, and in building the capacity of its local municipalities.

To carry out its core functions effectively, ADM, like any other institution, depends on the availability of necessary and sufficient resources. Records management is one of the key resources that enables ADM to accomplish its organisational goals and it indirectly affects the level of service delivery to communities.

This chapter seeks to establish whether records management at ADM is receiving the attention it deserves. The research will therefore examine the current record keeping and records management practices at ADM against the legislative framework regulating the management of public records.

### **3.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The role players involved in the management of ADM's records include the Municipal Manager, Director: Corporate Services, Records Manager, Information Technology Manager, Manager: Auxiliary Services, Senior Admin Officer: Fleet and Archives, Admin Officer: Archives (Registry head), Registry/ records office staff and records users. The roles and responsibilities are discussed henceforth. Some information in points 3.2.1 to 3.2.8 in the next discussion has been extracted from the job descriptions of the respective officials.

### **3.2.1 MUNICIPAL MANAGER**

As the accounting officer of the institution, the Municipal Manager is ultimately accountable for the record keeping and records management practices of ADM. He/ she should ensure implementation and maintenance of sound records management practices to enhance accountability, transparency and improved service delivery. As the head of the governmental body, the Municipal Manager is required, in terms of Section 13(5)(a) of the National Archives and Records Service Act 43 of 1996 (NARS Act), to designate an official of the body to be the Records Manager of the body.

### **3.2.2 DIRECTOR: CORPORATE SERVICES**

The Corporate Services Department is the custodian of ADM's records. The Director: Corporate Services has delegated authority from the Municipal Manager to ensure the effective and efficient management of ADM's records. The Director manages the performance of the Records Manager.

### **3.2.3 RECORDS MANAGER**

The main responsibility of the Records Manager is to ensure that ADM complies with the requirements of the NARS Act. According to the National Archives and Records Service's (NARS) Performance Criteria for Records Managers of governmental bodies in South Africa, the functions of the Records Manager include, but not limited to the following:

- i) Drafting and implementing a records management policy and the records procedure manual for ADM;
- ii) Ensuring that ADM has an approved Filing System/ File Plan;
- iii) Ensuring the safe custody and storage of all ADM records in all formats;
- iv) Ensuring proper maintenance and management of ADM records;
- v) Ensuring that a proper disaster management programme is in place and communicated throughout ADM; and

- vi) Responsible for implementing and managing a suitable training programme for managers, employees and records management staff, to make them aware of their joint responsibility in maintaining sound records management practices.

To successfully carry out the above mentioned functions, the official must ensure that the records management programme is allocated with the appropriate resources, that is, finance, staff and equipment.

#### **3.2.4 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) MANAGER**

The IT manager is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of electronic systems that store records. He/she should work in conjunction with the Records Manager to select an appropriate electronic records management system that will meet the needs of the organisation. He/ she should also ensure that electronic public records are properly managed, protected and appropriately preserved for as long as they are required for business, legal and long-term preservation purposes.

#### **3.2.5 MANAGER: AUXILIARY SERVICES**

The Manager: Auxiliary Services is a unit manager under which records management is located. This official has delegated authority from the Records Manager to co-ordinate and oversee the records/ archives management function. Among the responsibilities of this official is to ensure that a Records Management Policy, Procedure Manual and systems are developed, compilation and updating of a File Plan and disposal of ADM's records.

#### **3.2.6 SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICER: ASSETS AND ARCHIVES**

This official ensures the centralisation of the records management function. This official works hand in hand with the registry head to workshop ADM officials on the requirements of the NARS Act and their record keeping responsibilities to ensure sound records management. This task involves communicating ADM's



Records Management Policy, Records Management Procedure Manual and the File Plan to ADM officials. This official also acts as a liaison between the registry staff and management.

### **3.2.7 ADMINISTRATION OFFICER: ARCHIVES (REGISTRY HEAD)**

The registry head is responsible for the day-to-day management of the registry office staff. This official drafts the Records Management Policy and Procedure Manual and communicates these to all officials. The Administration Officer also compiles and updates File Plans and arrange for the disposal of records. In consultation with the Senior Admin Officer, the official identifies performance gaps and communicates training needs of registry staff to managers, to improve their performance standard. This official also ensures that registry staff are provided with sufficient resources to enable them to perform their duties effectively. The registry head is responsible for controlling the movement of files and ensuring safe custody and storage of documents.

### **3.2.8 REGISTRY/ RECORDS OFFICE STAFF**

The registry staff are responsible for the physical management of the records in their care. They file documents and retrieve them when requested. They also assist ADM staff with the allocation of file reference numbers.

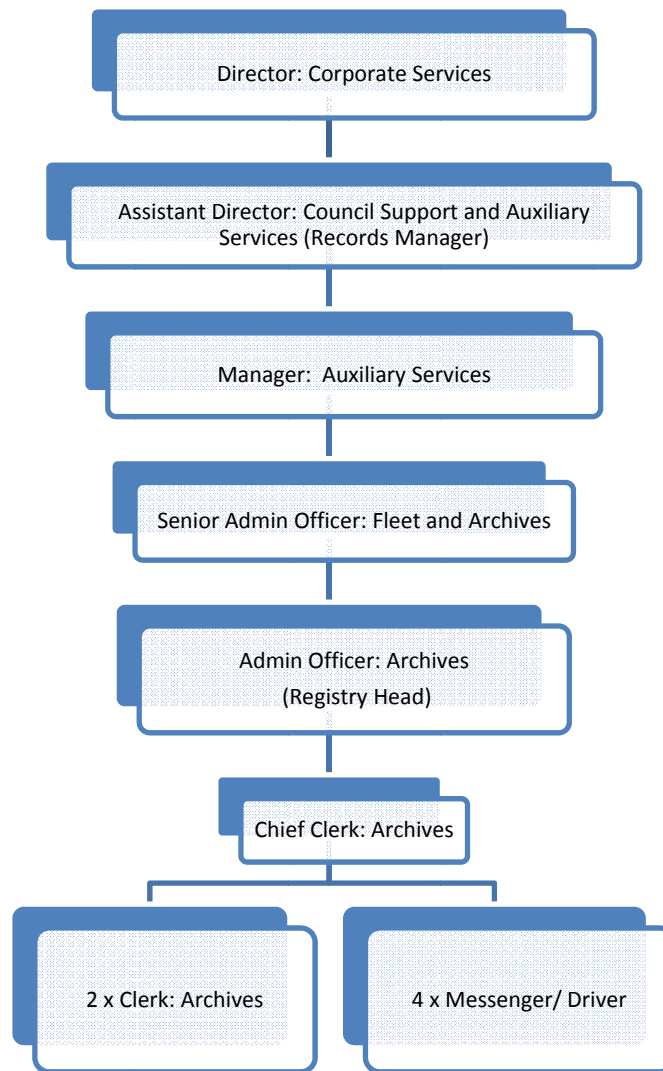
### **3.2.9 STAFF/ USERS**

According to the South African National Archives: Records Management: Best Practices Guide (the Guide), sound records management is a collective responsibility which all members of staff have an equal obligation to maintain (<http://www.national.archives.gov.za>). In terms of the Guide, ADM staff create records of transactions while conducting official business and they should manage those records efficiently and effectively by:

- Allocating reference numbers according to the approved file plan;

- Forwarding paper-based records to the registry for filing; and
- Ensuring that records are destroyed/deleted only in accordance with the written disposal authority issued by the national Archivist.

### 3.3 STRUCTURE OF ADM'S RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION



**Figure 3.2: Structure of ADM's Records Management Section (Adapted from ADM's organogram)**

In terms of the South African National Archives' Records Management Policy Manual (2003:152) (the Policy Manual), an organisation's registry should be centrally situated in order to facilitate and expedite the distribution and flow of

files. The Manual further states that the registry office should rather occupy an area that is initially too large with the view to avoid it becoming too cramped later. Due to office space challenges ADM's Records Office is not centrally located as prescribed. However, it is easily accessible. The size of the office is reasonable, but may become too cramped if the disposal programme is not implemented effectively.

### **3.4 COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, ACT 108 OF 1996**

Section 32(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, (the 1996 Constitution), states that everyone has the right of access to information held by the state or another person when that information is required for the exercise or protection of any right. To give effect to this provision, ADM developed the Promotion of Access to Information Manual as per the requirements of the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000, which is elaborated on under 3.7 below.

In terms of Section 41(1)(c) of the 1996 Constitution, all spheres of government and all organs of state must provide effective, transparent, accountable and coherent government for the Republic as a whole. The importance of records management in transparency and accountability was explored in Chapter 2, where it was stated that effective record-keeping practices contribute to the maintenance of these democratic principles. ADM relies on the availability of accurate records to account to its communities and to exercise transparency. Annual reports and the Integrated Development Plan are availed to communities and are some of the instruments used by ADM to practise accountability and transparency. Without an effective records management system these documents would not be produced as they are a product of information gathered from the records.

Section 95(1)(f) of the 1996 Constitution requires governmental bodies to grant access to the office of the Auditor-General for information on the financial transactions entered into in order to give account to the taxpayers. ADM does

fulfill this requirement by furnishing officials from the Auditor-General's office with the required information. However, there are few exceptions where old records cannot be tracked.

### **3.5 COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE OF SOUTH AFRICA ACT 43 OF 1996**

As mentioned earlier in this document, the purpose of the NARS Act is, among others, to provide for the proper management and care of the records of governmental bodies. As discussed in Chapter 2, for an organisation to have a sound records management programme, the programme should comprise of these elements: appointment/ designation of a Records Manager, development of a records management policy and records management procedure manual, compilation of a file plan and records control schedule, records control mechanisms, disposal programme and training of records staff and staff members in general. These elements will be used to benchmark ADM's current records management practices against prescribed legislative requirements. The other requirements of the NARS Act will be examined and ADM's compliance will be established.

#### **3.5.1 APPOINTMENT / DESIGNATION OF A RECORDS MANAGER**

In accordance with Section 13(5)(a) of the NARS Act, the head of a governmental body shall, subject to any law governing the employment of personnel of the governmental body concerned and such requirements as may be prescribed, designate an official of the body to be the Records Manager of the body. According to NARS, the purpose of the post of Records Manager is to develop and manage an organisation-wide records management programme designed to ensure that recordkeeping and records management practices are effectively meeting the organisation's objectives, and moreover, to ensure that the records management practices of the organisation comply with the requirements of the NARS Act.

In terms of NARS's Performance Criteria for Records Managers of Governmental Bodies, a Records Manager should have, amongst others, knowledge of the history and functions of the office, qualifications in records management, extensive experience in the field of paper-based records management, experience in the field of electronic records management and presentation skills.

In 2007, officials from the Eastern Cape Provincial Archives and Records Services conducted an intensive assessment of ADM's records management practices. One of the findings was that ADM does not have a designated Records Manager and it was therefore recommended that a permanent appointment of a Records Manager dedicated only to records management be made. This culminated in the designation of the sectional manager responsible for records management, among other responsibilities, as ADM's Records Manager (during 2009).

The position of a Records Manager is a very crucial position as this official is entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the welfare of the organisation's records. This official is also required to influence policy relating to the preservation of institutional information and memory. This includes identifying information technology products that are use-friendly, cost-effective and environmentally sensitive to preserve valuable resources. Furthermore, the official should also ensure that records management is an objective in the organisation's strategy and strategic plans. The NARS prefers that a Records Manager be dedicated only to records management. Having additional responsibilities other than records management may impact negatively on the Records Manager's performance, as this official might end up neglecting records management, not deliberately, but due to other responsibilities that might be more pressing than records management.

If a Records Manager does not have capacity to properly control records, this situation may lead to a weak record keeping system and may adversely affect the ability of ADM to carry out its mandate effectively.

Further to that, the NARS's Records Management Policy Manual (2003:10) stipulates that offices with several components should appoint separate Records Managers. However, these Records Managers should remain accountable to the Records Manager of the whole body. ADM consists of three registries. The first one is the main registry located within the Auxiliary Services Section where all ADM records are kept. The other two sub-registries are located at the Human Resources Division and the Budget and Treasury Office and they keep ADM's personnel and Councillors' records and finance related records, respectively. In both sub-registries there are officials responsible for filing and managing the records. However, there are no Records Managers for the two sub-registries as prescribed by legislation. These sub-registries handle very crucial information, but there is no synergy between them and the main registry. The Records Manager, who is responsible for the management of ADM records as a whole is not aware of what is taking place in these registries. As a result the two sections do not fully comply with the NARS Act. Also, ADM established satellite offices in seven of its local municipal areas, but the management of records in those offices has not yet been formalised.

### **3.5.2 DEVELOPMENT OF A RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE MANUAL**

One of the responsibilities entrusted to the Records Manager in terms of the Performance Criteria for Records Managers of Governmental Bodies, is the development and implementation of a Records Management Policy and Records Management Procedure Manual. According to the NARS's Records Management Policy Manual (2003:10) the immediate objective of the policy is the creation and management of authentic, reliable and useable records, capable of supporting the business functions of the office. The long-term objective of the policy is to ensure that governmental bodies capture, maintain and protect a corporate memory of decisions and actions that impact on the lives of the people and the environment they govern. The Records Management Policy should be reflective of these elements: responsible official, indexing/allocating reference numbers, disposal of records, custody, security, legality, evaluation and conclusion. The Records Manager must ensure that the policy is implemented in such a way that

everyone in the organisation is familiar with it and it should be reviewed at regular intervals. The procedure manual is a simplified and more detailed document that guides officials.

ADM currently has a Records Management Policy and Records Management Procedure Manual which were approved in 2003. At the time of conducting this research, the reviewed Policy and Procedure Manual had just been approved by the Provincial Archives and Records Services and were in the process of being taken to ADM's structures for approval and adoption (refer to **Appendix B**). The two ADM documents fully comply with the NARS Act.

### **3.5.3 COMPILATION OF RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS**

In South Africa, governmental bodies are required to develop, maintain and implement two types of records classification systems, namely the File Plan and the Records Control Schedule (<http://www.national.archives.co.za>).

#### **3.5.3.1 File Plan**

The National Archives' Records Management Policy Manual (2003:vii) defines a file plan as a predetermined systematic logical and systematic structure into which records are arranged and intellectually stored according to subjects and subject groups to facilitate efficient retrieval and disposal of records. Separate file plans should be compiled for paper based records and electronic records and master copies should be updated on a regular basis.

ADM's file plan was approved in 2003. However, it does not make any provision for the disposal of records as required by applicable legislation. Documents at ADM are filed according to the file plan. However, there is at times misfiling emanating from misallocation of reference numbers.

The Records Management Policy Manual (2003:84) further stipulates that the change over to the new file plan requires that the current file plan and the files opened according to it be terminated in its entirety on the day before, and that

none of the old files be used thereafter. The closed files may be needed for a time for reference purposes and may even accompany the new files initially, but should be removed from the registry as soon as conveniently possible. At ADM, files that were opened in terms of the old file plan are still in existence, though kept at an off-site storage facility. The documents should have been disposed of a long time ago.

### **3.5.3.2 Records Control Schedule**

The Records Management Policy Manual (2003:viii) defines a records control schedule as a control mechanism for records other than the correspondence files (other records). Examples are disks, plans, agendas and minutes, CD's, diagrammes, and others. The records control schedule should consists of the following components:

- Schedule for paper-based records other than correspondence files;
- Schedule for electronic records systems, other than the correspondence system;
- Schedule for microfilm records; and
- Schedule for audio-visual records.

Like the file plan, the records control schedule should have a disposal authority issued for it. At the time of conducting this study, the first ever ADM's records control schedule was still at the drafting stage.

The records classification systems are crucial in organisations, as they serve as a guide on how to store, retrieve and dispose of records. They also assist organisations to know what/ which records are in their possession. The absence of a records control schedule at ADM is an unfortunate situation as the Records Manager is not aware of who is keeping what record, and this may result to unauthorised removal and destruction of records.



### **3.5.4 RECORDS CONTROL MECHANISMS**

According to the Records Management: Best Practices Guide, all governmental bodies should keep the following control registers:

#### **3.5.4.1 Register of files opened**

This register contains a description and opening dates of all files that were actually opened according to the subject provisions in the filing system. ADM does not have a register of files opened despite the fact that this was raised as an irregularity in a report submitted by the Provincial Archives and Records Services in 2007 on the assessment of ADM's records management practices. ADM therefore does not know how many files it has per subject, and how many volumes per file.

#### **3.5.4.2 Register of File Movements**

This is a register where all files borrowed by the institution's officials from the records office are recorded. This register exists at ADM, however, it is not properly monitored as officials keep files in their offices for long periods. Ideally, files should not be kept in individual offices for more than three (3) days because that defeats the purpose of centralising records for easy access by all officials.

#### **3.5.4.3 Register of Disposal Authorities**

This register contains copies of all disposal authorities issued by the National Archives and Records Service to that specific governmental body. ADM has not yet applied for a disposal authority on any of its files and thus does not have a register of disposal authorities.

#### **3.5.4.4 Destruction Register**

A destruction register is a register that contains information on the year in which non-archival records are due for destruction. ADM has not yet applied for a disposal authority on any of its file plans and thus does not have a destruction register.

#### **3.5.5 TRAINING**

According to the World Bank (2000:2), in many countries around the world, record keeping systems are unable to cope with the growing mass of unmanaged records and this is particularly true in countries where Records and Archives Managers lack training or professional development opportunities. This merely implies that in institutions where Records Managers are not properly trained, the records management programme of that institution is likely doomed. The Records Manager, in terms of the Records Management Policy Manual (2003:10), is required to attend the National Archives and Records Services' Records Management Course and/ or any other training sessions provided to Records Managers by NARS. This training is necessary to equip the Records Manager with skills to drive a successful records management programme.

Furthermore, training of staff dealing with the management of records (records practitioners) is crucial to maintaining sound records management practices. Hence the World Bank (2000:35) argues that the quality of any records management programme is directly related to the quality of the staff who operate it. The records manager should therefore ensure that the registry head and registry staff are aware of and adhere to the standards, procedures and methods of records management as entailed in the NARS Act. Mnjama (2003:11) stresses this by stating that the effective management of public sector records must be supported by, amongst others, a team of competent and well trained staff.

All ADM records office staff, with the exception of the Registry Head, were recruited internally with no background in the field of records management. No

support or training was provided to them to develop their records management knowledge and skills. As a result records office staff are not well versed with the allocation of reference numbers and with filing system maintenance procedures and this leads to misplaced records or misfiling. This state of affairs has a negative impact on service delivery as it can delay the decision-making process.

In addition to this, argues that records management training which purely focuses on the practitioners will lead to a failure to implement or to comply with policies and procedures, users as well should be adequately trained. Training managers is an important part of the process of implementing sound records keeping policies and procedures, ensuring that they understand and appreciate their roles and responsibilities and the relationship between records management, risk management, corporate governance and competitive advantage (<http://www.metrofile.co.za/>). According to the Policy Manual (2003:36), records management is a shared responsibility between users, records managers and managers.

Training on records management is frequently provided to ADM staff, managers included. This is done in the form of departmental roadshows conducted by records office staff, where the Records Management Policy, Records Management Procedure Manual and the File Plan are presented to staff. Records management is also included in the induction programme where presentations are made to newly appointed officials. However, many officials undermine the records management function and they do not recognise the fundamental role played by effective records management in fulfilling ADM's mandate. Despite the efforts made the Records Management Section, staff still continue to act in transgression of the NARS Act by not handling documents properly.

Also, a Records Management Committee, wherein all departments are represented exists, and meetings are held bimonthly to discuss records management issues and problems thereof. In addition to this, a Secretaries' Forum was also established to discuss issues affecting records management as

Secretaries are regarded as the major role-players in records management as they create and handle most of the correspondence. The meetings sit quarterly.

### **3.5.6 DISPOSAL PROGRAMME**

One of the key objectives of the Records Manager, in terms of the Performance Criteria for Records Managers of Governmental Bodies, is to determine the retention period for records and to ensure that records are only disposed of in terms of a written disposal authority issued by the National/ Provincial Archivist. The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act 43 of 1996 defines a disposal authority as a written authority issued in terms of Section 13(2)(a) specifying records to be transferred into the custody of the National Archives or specifying records to be otherwise disposed of (destroyed/ destructed).

The destruction of records in terms of a disposal authority is carried out by the body/ office concerned and must be done on a systematic and routine basis in the course of normal business activity. Once records have been destroyed, a destruction certificate should be compiled and a copy submitted to the NARS. With regard to the transfer of records, Section 11(2) of the NARS Act stipulates that public records determined by the National/ Provincial Archivist as having archival value must be kept by the governmental body for twenty years from the date that the records came into being.

The advantage of implementing an effective disposal programme is that space is cleared for the new records being created. At ADM there is no proper and regular disposal programme and consequently there is inadequate space for records. ADM has never applied for a disposal authority on any of its file plans. Inactive records dating back to the 1930's which are no longer required for administrative purposes are still in existence though the old file plan to which they belong was closed in 2003. As a result, due to space challenges these files are kept at an off-site storage facility in containers. This off-site storage facility does not fully conform to archival standards as the records can easily be stolen, infested with insects or be damaged by direct sunlight or fire. Ideally, records

such as forms should not be kept for more than three (3) years, they should be destroyed immediately after auditing as they are not vital records.

The current file plan was approved and implemented in 2003, but no records have been disposed of since the implementation date. ADM is confronted by huge office space challenges and using space to store old records is not a sound financial expense. ADM should therefore implement a systematic disposal programme which should ensure that records that are no longer used are disposed of on a frequent basis. The first step would be to apply for a disposal authority for the old file plan that was closed in 2003 so that records that have an archival value can be transferred into archival custody and the ones with no archival value can be destroyed. The second step would be to apply for a disposal authority for the current file plan and ensure that records are disposed of on a yearly basis.

### **3.5.7 RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

Coe (in Visser and Erasmus 2002:196) refers to risk management as the process of identifying and controlling risks of all kinds: accidents, fire, theft, and liability suits. Valsamakis et al (1992:141 in Visser and Erasmus (2002:196) refer to risk management as a managerial function aimed at protecting the organisation, its people, assets and projects against the consequences of pure risk, more particularly, reducing the severity and variability of losses. These definitions demonstrate that every institution's management has a duty to protect its resources (records inclusive) against any risk that may result in their loss. Common risks associated with records management are fire, water, pests, dust, rough handling and unauthorised removal.

In terms of the NARS's Policy Manual (2003:35), it is the responsibility of the Records Manager to develop a programme that will ensure that records are protected against all risks and that a proper disaster management programme is in place and communicated throughout the organisation. This implies that the Records Manager should develop mechanisms to manage records management

related risks and should ensure that records management is included in the institution's overall risk management programme.

At the time of conducting this study, ADM's risk management programme was still at an infant stage and there was still no substantial information to determine whether records management is entailed in the programme or not. Each directorate was still to identify strategic risks affecting that particular directorate and that had not yet materialised.

However, of concern is that the Records Manager is not among the Risk Management Coordinators (officials representing their respective departments) who assist the Chief Risk Officer with updating the institution's risks. This is once again a decision of concern as the Records Manager guards ADM's memory and is expected to ensure that records management is included in the institution's strategic planning process. Visser and Erasmus (2002:198) argue that one of the critical components of a well established risk management programme is a good record keeping system. Accurate records are necessary to identify, measure and control risks, to evaluate the effectiveness of the risk management programme. The Records Manager's non-involvement in the process might have detrimental effects on ADM's records management practices as management might not be aware of risks facing the records management function and therefore not include it in its strategic and budget plans.

An institution should also mitigate the risk of permanently losing its records in cases of disaster, by developing a Records Management Disaster Prevention and Recovery Plan. In terms of the Policy Manual (2003:35) the Records Manager should ensure that a proper disaster management programme is in place and communicated throughout the organisation. Institutions should identify critical needs, which include all information and equipment, that would be needed in order to continue operations should a disaster occur and the institution be destroyed or become inaccessible (<http://www.drj.com>). The identification and protection of copies of records containing vital information and the implementation of records disaster mitigation and recovery programmes are an insurance policy against disruption of critical organisation's operations

<http://www.archives.gov>). This should be done for both paper-based and electronic records.

Disaster recovery planning involves the establishment of an off-site storage to keep duplicate records, or backup processing. At ADM there is no disaster prevention and recovery plan and the implications are that ADM runs the risk of forever losing its records and institutional memory should a disaster occur and that will badly disrupt the continuation of its operations.

### **3.5.8 RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

According to NARS, governmental bodies can only be effective and efficient if:

- Records management is considered a business process designed to support business objectives;
- Records are considered a resource and are utilised fully and cost effectively to realise business objectives;
- Each governmental body creates and maintains a culture which will promote effective and efficient records management to facilitate efficient and timely decision making.

It is therefore imperative that records management be incorporated into the strategic planning processes of an institution. The NARS further states that to ensure that records management receives the attention it deserves, it should be a strategic objective in the governmental body's strategic and business plans. Heads of governmental bodies should also ensure that they budget for the records management function and that the necessary financial, human and technological resources are allocated to support the records management function (<http://www.national.archives.gov.za>). ADM's Corporate Services departmental scorecard for the 2009/2010 financial year is reflective of some of the components of records management. For example, the reviewal of the Records Management Policy and Records Management Procedure Manual. However, the records management function has never been reviewed holistically to ensure that it is supported with adequate resources to ensure its effectiveness.

In other words records management is not reflected in the ADM's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) as one of the strategic objectives.

However, efforts are being made in that during the 2009/2010 financial year, senior management identified a need to revive the document management system which became a white elephant immediately after it was introduced in 2002/2003 due to various challenges. At the time of conducting this research the revival process had just kickstarted and it was envisaged that it will be completed before the end of the current financial year, which ends on 30 June 2010.

Furthermore, effective records management plays a fundamental role in all the stages of the strategic (IDP) process at ADM, that is, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reviewal. The World Bank's website contends that all the elements for effective development depend upon an effective records management infrastructure. Without a records management infrastructure, government and organisations are incapable of effectively managing current operations, and have no ability to use the experience of the past guidance (<http://www.worldbank.org>) Thus, if ADM does not preserve the data collected during the planning phase of the IDP process, it would be difficult to plan for the implementation phase as there will be inadequate information. Records management is also crucial in the monitoring, evaluation and reviewal stages of the IDP as records provide access to precedents and policies, and evidence of what was done or decided in the past, to enable senior management to make informed decisions.

The above discussion displays management's partial commitment in ensuring that records management is included in ADM's strategic planning. It would be ideal if planning for the records management function is done at the strategic level and ADM's management ensures that the plans are cascaded down to all the levels of employees. To be taken seriously, the records management function should be driven by senior managers and they should give their full support to the officials responsible for records management.



### **3.6 COMPLIANCE WITH THE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSACTION ACT 25 OF 2002**

The NARS Act defines an electronic records system as a system where information is generated electronically and stored by means of computer technology. Some examples include the data files, databases, word processing files, electronic spreadsheets, and many more. The Electronic Communications and Transaction Act 25 of 2002 regulates electronic records of public institutions, over and above the NARS Act 43 of 1996. The objectives of the Act are to enable and facilitate electronic communication and transactions to acknowledge the importance of such information for economic and social prosperity. The Act furthermore promotes legal certainty and gives legal recognition to data messages as being information incorporated into an agreement. The Act stipulates that information must be accessible in a format in which it can be read, stored and retrieved by another party, electronically or as a computer printout.

Section 14 of the Act deals with data messages, where the law requires information to be presented or retained in its original form. The integrity of the information can be assessed using criteria such as considerations as to whether or not the information has remained complete and unaltered. Furthermore, this integrity will be assessed by the capability of the office of origin to display or produce the information as it was presented to the person.

Section 27 and 28 of the Act encourage the use and basic requirements of electronic file plans to index and classify records that are created or retained. Electronic file plans must take into account the manner and format of electronic signatures. These systems should identify criteria for the authentication of data messages, appropriate security control processes and procedures that will ensure integrity, confidentiality and security particularly of data messages and electronic payments.

The same principles that apply to the paper-based system should apply to the electronic records keeping systems for electronic correspondence, that is, there must be an approved file plan, all amendments and/or additions to the system

must be reported and approved by the National Archivist and a disposal authority must be obtained before documents can be disposed of.

E-mail sent or received, is an electronic document as it contains information about business activities. Hence the NARS requires governmental bodies to put the necessary infrastructure, policies, procedures and systems in place to ensure that records in all formats, including electronic format, are managed in an integrated manner. According to NARS, the Records Manager should devise strategies for managing and preserving electronic records to prevent the unauthorised destruction of information or unintentional disclosure of sensitive information, and moreover, to ensure that official records are kept for future referencing. In this regard, the Records Manager should establish a good relationship with the IT Manager as he/she is required to liaise with the IT Manager to share information regarding the proper storage of electronic records and should be involved in the regular maintenance of records stored on electronic storage media.

ADM does have an E-mail Usage Policy, but from the IT perspective and not the records management perspective. The policy does not reflect on the management and handling of official documents sent by e-mail as per the requirements of the NARS Act. This simply means that there is inadequate guidance and training of ADM staff on the handling of emailed documents, and this may lead to the loss of institutional memory as officials might delete documents on their local hard drives without thinking that they are public records.

The National Archives and Records Service requires that the head of a governmental body notifies the National Archivist in writing of the institution's intention to introduce an electronic records management system. The main reasons for this are as follows:

- There must be a correlation between a paper-based records system and an electronic system.

- The disposal requirements for electronic records should be built into the systems during the planning phase of the systems to prevent records from being kept for unnecessary long periods.
- The requirements regarding the medium to long term storage and the format for long term accessibility of archival records should be built into electronic systems in the planning phase of such systems to prevent records becoming inaccessible.

ADM did not advise the National/ Provincial Archives of its intention to introduce or revive the electronic document management system, as prescribed. The non-involvement of the Provincial/ National Archives in the planning stages of the electronic document management system may negatively affect the entire life-cycle of records.

### **3.7 COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROMOTION OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT NO. 2 OF 2000**

The Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA) was promulgated in 2000 to give effect to the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, which gives everyone the right of access to information held by a public or private body, subject to certain limitations. The Act requires that public and private bodies compile a PAIA manual that provides information regarding the subjects and categories of records held by such body and to also publish the names and details of the Information Officer and the Deputy Information Officer.

Amathole District Municipality compiled a manual in 2003 in fulfillment of the requirements of PAIA. The manual details the manner in which ADM records can be accessed, and place in which such records are located. It also provides the name and details of the Information Officer and the Deputy Information Officer.

The manual has never been reviewed since its adoption and implementation, despite many developments that have taken place at ADM. The organisation has since been restructured and both the Information Officer and Deputy Information

Officer reflected in the manual have since left the institution. This implies that the information contained in the manual is not a true reflection of the state of affairs at ADM.

In addition to this, no efforts were made to inform the relevant stakeholders about the existence of the ADM's Promotion of Access to Information manual. The records office staff and ADM staff in general were never workshopped on the manual and consequently certain staff members are not aware of its existence and its contents. This could result in instances where staff avail information to the public unaware that they are not supposed to. This could have a detrimental effect for ADM as officials could disclose information that could harm the organisation or infringe the privacy rights of individuals.

### **3.8 COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROMOTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE ACT 3 OF 2000**

The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 was enacted to give effect to the right to administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair and to the right to written reasons for administrative action as contemplated in Section 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, and to provide for matters incidental thereto.

One of the administrative action that affects people's rights at ADM concerns applications received from community members for an indigent status for the provision of water and sanitation, to qualify for a rebate. ADM follows a fair procedure when making decisions relating to the matter as only applicants who meet the criteria are awarded the indigent status. Community members whose applications are turned down are given reasons for such decision and records are subsequently kept safely.

### **3.9 COMPLIANCE WITH THE MUNICIPAL FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT 56 OF 2003**

One of the primary objectives of the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA), is to secure sound and sustainable management of the financial affairs of municipalities and other institutions in the local sphere of government. The importance of good record-keeping practices to minimise corruption which drains the financial resources of any institution was discussed at length in Chapter 2. It was also mentioned that good record keeping also ensures that governmental bodies manage their financial resources properly.

An effective records management system is a critical element in all the components of public financial management, budgeting being one of them. Records management plays a vital role throughout the stages of the budgeting process, starting from the planning and preparation stage, tabling, utilisation, monitoring and review. At the budget planning stage, managers require information that will assist them to determine the required resources for inclusion in the budget. Without proper record keeping systems, managers can make uninformed budgetary decisions that may result in under or overbudgeting, and may also not allocate funds to identified priorities as entailed in the Integrated Development Plan. In terms of Section 17(3) of the MFMA, when a budget is tabled at a council meeting it must be accompanied by supporting documentation. Supporting documentation can only be accessed when there is a sound records management programme. The utilisation of the budget is also monitored through effective record keeping. Furthermore, if ADM does not have sufficient or accurate records it will not be able to track its spending trend and will thus not be able to conduct effective reviewal of the budget.

According to Section 62(1)(b) of the Act, the accounting officer of a municipality is responsible for managing the financial administration of the municipality, and must for this purpose take all reasonable steps to ensure that full and proper records of financial affairs of the municipality are kept in accordance with any prescribed norms and standards. As discussed earlier, ADM's Budget and Treasury Office has a sub-registry and financial records are kept there.

Generally, supply chain management (SCM) is one of the components of public financial management where corruption prevails because most of the expenditure occurs there. Section 112(1) of the MFMA stipulates that the SCM policy of a municipality must be fair, equitable, transparent, competitive and cost effective and comply with prescribed regulatory framework for municipal supply chain management. Good records management underpins transparency and may assist the municipality should a dispute arising from the bid processes arise. ADM SCM records are well kept and in most cases there is supporting documentation for expenditure. These include keeping records of stock purchases and issuing. As a result corruption is minimal at ADM.

Chapter 12 of the MFMA deals with financial reporting and auditing. According to Section 121(2) of the MFMA, the purpose of the annual report is:

- (a) To provide a record of the activities of the municipality or municipal entity during the financial year to which the report relates; and
- (b) To provide a report on performance against the budget of the municipality or municipal entity for that financial year.

ADM acts in compliance with the MFMA in terms of the above as it has a good financial record keeping system. Annual reports cannot be compiled without the availability of records and auditing cannot be carried out. Also, financial statements cannot be prepared if relevant information is not forwarded to the official responsible for their preparation.

### **3.10 COMPLIANCE WITH THE WHITE PAPER ON TRANSFORMING PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY (BATHO PELE PRINCIPLES)**

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997, seeks to introduce a fresh approach to service delivery: an approach which places pressure on systems, procedures, attitudes and behavior within the Public Service and reorients them in the customer's favour, an approach which puts the people first. Eight principles for transforming public service delivery, referred to as the "Batho Pele" Principles, were identified as: consultation, service

standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress and value for money.

Records management plays a crucial role in putting the Batho Pele Principles into practice. This discussion will only focus on those principles that are mostly affected by records management. The Batho Pele Principles stipulate that consultation should not result in a list of demands that raise unrealistic expectations, rather it should reveal where resources and efforts should be focused in future to meet the public's most pressing needs. The availability of resources, particularly financial resources are contained in the records. Public institutions should therefore consult their records to establish what resources they have to meet the demands of its citizens. ADM also uses its records to determine what resources it requires to meet the demands of its communities, which comes to its attention during IDP Roadshows. Further to that, when consulting the communities, municipal officials report on planned programmes and projects, budget availability and progress made to date on the said programmes and projects. All these details are entailed in the organisation's records.

Public institutions are required in terms of the Batho Pele Principles, to publish standards for the level and quality of services they will provide, including the introduction of new services to those who have previously been denied access to them. To set or improve service standards, public institutions should obtain information that is contained in records, particularly when they need to determine areas that need improvement.

According to Section 4.5.1 of the White Paper on Batho Pele, information is one of the most powerful tools at the customer's disposal in exercising his or her right to good service. Right of access to information has been discussed at length under the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000. It has already been mentioned that in the absence of good record keeping practices there can be limited information to provide. Information is a strategic resource that can be maintained through effective records management. ADM disseminates

information to its citizens through roadshows, imbizos, newspapers, media publications, radio talkshows and other measures.

Section 4.6.1 of the White Paper on Batho Pele states that the importance of openness and transparency lies in the need to build confidence and trust between the public sector and the public they serve. According to the Public Service Commission report on the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Batho Pele Principle of Information (2009:14), the Batho Pele Principles of Information and Openness and Transparency are interrelated. The implementation of the Batho Pele Principle of Information leads to openness and transparency about the department concerned. Openness and transparency can only be achieved where there is maintenance of good record-keeping practices. The NARS's Records Management Best Practices agrees with this statement by stating that accountability and transparency can only happen if the public to which governmental bodies are accountable, has ready access to all information that underpins the decision-making processes of governmental bodies. ADM does put the Batho Pele Principle of Openness and Transparency into practice by availing information contained in its records. This is normally done when the Executive Mayor presents an annual report to the public at ADM's Open Day meetings and entertains questions that come from community members.

Pertaining to the Batho Pele Principle of Redress, the White Paper requires heads of departments to regularly and personally review complaints, and to see how they have been dealt with. Records on the complaints should be kept to enable the effective and efficient review process of the complaints.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

Although ADM's records management practices are satisfactory, ADM still needs to go a long way to improve its records management systems. It is evident from the above discussion that institutions should have skilled and experienced Records Managers if they aspire to have proper records management systems. This is due to the fact that the responsibility of ensuring compliance with legislation regulating records management, particularly the NARS Act, vests with



the Records Manager. This official is also assigned with the responsibility of influencing the institution's strategic planning process and ensuring that all officials are workshopped and acquaint themselves with the contents of the ADM's Records Management Policy, Records Management Procedure Manual and File Plan. ADM should thus consider capacitating its Records Manager and inculcate the culture of caring for public records on senior management and staff at large. Training programmes on records management should also be intensified.

Neglecting the records management function can detrimentally affect ADM and that could culminate in the permanent loss of institutional memory. Ideally, the Records Manager should be dedicated to records management, so as to completely focus on the records management function.

Given the fact that records management is a collective responsibility whereby all users are required to play a role in ensuring its effectiveness, the next chapter will focus on the results of the survey in which respondents were ADM employees (records users). The aim of the survey is to identify the root causes of the problems facing the records management function. Findings will be presented, as well and recommendations aimed at addressing the identified problems, will be made.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL SURVEY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter Three, a critical analysis of Amathole District Municipality's (ADM) records management practices was done. These practices were measured against legislative prescripts on records management to determine ADM's compliance and to highlight the negative implications that may be caused by neglecting the records management function. The purpose of this chapter is firstly to discuss the research methodology that was followed to investigate the role of records management at ADM. Secondly, the research results and findings will be presented and analysed.

#### **4.2 CHOICE OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University's Study Guide on Research Methodology (2008:12-13) highlights the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Qualitative research places emphasis on understanding through looking closely at people's words, actions and records. Quantitative approach to research looks past these, to their mathematical significance and the results of the observations are quantified. According to the study guide (2008:13), a major difference between the two approaches is not the counting or lack of counting of the occurrences of a particular word or behavior, but rather the meaning given to the words, behaviours or documents as interpreted through quantitative or statistical analysis as opposed to patterns of meaning which emerge from the data, and are often presented in the participant's own words.

It is stated by Henning (2004:1) that if one wants to look into social reality, using a prepared questionnaire with specific items to which people must respond by choosing a predetermined set of scaled responses, the study will be known as a quantitative inquiry. The researcher perceived quantitative research methodology to be more relevant for this study as it would enable the researcher to obtain

relevant information from the sample group through a questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions.

A combination of both the descriptive and analytical approaches was also used. According to Neuman (2006:34) a descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship. In other words, the research can only report on what has or is happening. In this study the researcher used ADM's Records Management Policy, Procedure Manual and other relevant documentation as a source to describe the current records management practices at ADM. An analytical approach was also applied to do a critical evaluation of ADM's records management practices against legislative requirements.

#### **4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:647), a research design is a plan or structured framework of how you intend conducting the research process in order to solve a problem. The type of inquiry conducted was instrumental in determining the type of research design to be used. Since the attitudes, behaviour and experience of ADM employees, amongst other things, had to be studied in order to thoroughly investigate the role of records management at ADM, the survey research was used in this study. Bryman (1992:11) argues that the survey's capacity for generating quantifiable data on larger numbers of people who are known to be representative of a wider population in order to test theories or hypotheses, has been viewed by many practitioners as a means of capturing many of the ingredients of science. Neuman (2006:276) concurs with this view by stating that survey researchers sample many respondents who answer the same questions, measure many variables, test multiple hypotheses and infer temporal order from questions about past behaviour, experiences and characteristics.

Thus the study sought to test the hypothesis and to investigate the behaviour, experience and characteristics of ADM employees towards ADM's records management function. The primary question that was explored in this study was

whether the management of records, as one of the valuable resources, receives the attention it deserves at ADM. To answer the primary question and the sub-questions, a questionnaire with structured questions was constructed and distributed to selected respondents within ADM.

#### **4.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The population was constituted of ADM officials from all departments since records management is a cross-departmental collective responsibility. However, due to limited time, the researcher could not study the whole population and had to select a sample of thirty-five (35) participants. As Neuman (2006:19) puts it, that by sampling, the primary goal of researchers is to get a small collection of units from a much larger collection or population, such that the researcher can study the smaller group and produce accurate generalisations about the larger group.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, two non-probability sampling methods were used in the study, namely the quota and the purposive sampling methods. Questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents from different job levels or categories, ranging from senior management, middle management to lower levels not below level 10 (between Level 2 and 10, Level 2 being the third highest level at ADM). The reason for selecting these employees is their insight and understanding of the research topic as they deal with correspondence in the execution of their duties, and also understand the strategic role of records management in an organisation. The selected sample was constituted of officials from all departments to ensure that the views of all departments are represented.

#### **4.5 CONDUCTING THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

Babbie and Mouton (2001:205) describe survey research as a type of research which involves collecting data through asking people questions, either in self-administered questionnaires or through interviews, which in turn can be conducted face-to-face or over the telephone. Approval was granted to the researcher by ADM's Municipal Manager to conduct the survey at ADM.

Subsequent to that, a questionnaire was distributed to a sample of thirty-five (35) participants.

#### **4.5.1 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

The questionnaire consisted of sixteen (16) questions as the researcher did not want to demoralize respondents by asking too many questions (**refer to Appendix A**). Fourteen (14) of the questions were closed-ended and two (2) were open-ended. The fact that the study was conducted at the time when ADM officials had a hectic schedule due to the auditing, strategic planning and budgeting processes that were taking place, was also taken into account when the questionnaire was administered. The average amount of time taken to complete the questionnaire was fifteen (15) minutes. The questions were preceded by the research title and instructions. Participants were assured of their anonymity and it was further mentioned that confidentiality would be observed. Consent forms were issued to participants to be completed and signed prior to answering the questions.

Respondents were expected to choose one response from a series of questions and mark the appropriate answer with an X. The questions intended to reveal the shortcomings and inadequacies of the current ADM's records management practices. Hence in certain questions respondents were required to motivate their answers.

#### **4.5.2 E-MAIL SURVEY**

Neuman (2006:299) identifies four (4) types of surveys, namely, mail and self-administered questionnaires, telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews and web surveys, with each having its advantages and disadvantages. Because of the educational level of the target population under study, an assumption was made that all respondents are capable and competent to understand the instructions and questions and complete the questionnaires on their own. In this regard questionnaires were distributed by means of an e-mail. The purpose of the research was explained on the e-mail and respondents were given eight (8)

days to complete the questionnaires. However, eight (8) days lapsed and very few questionnaires were returned. Although the use of self-administered questionnaires is possibly the cheapest method, Neuman (2006:299) contends that the biggest problem with it is a low response rate because people do not always complete and return questionnaires, or a questionnaire is returned very late.

Non-respondents were urged to return the questionnaires. The researcher made e-mail and telephonic follow-ups and established that most respondents were willing to participate but either forgot or had no time to complete the questionnaire. Consequently the response rate improved slightly, but in some instances, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews where either the interviewer or the interviewee recorded answers on the questionnaire.

#### **4.6 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The sections below intend to focus on the data analysis, and the summarised and consolidated results of the empirical study will then be presented as the survey findings of this study.

##### **4.6.1 RESPONSE RATE**

Out of thirty-five (35) questionnaires distributed, only twenty-eight (28) were completed and returned. The researcher proceeded with the analysis of the data as an 80% response rate is regarded as satisfactory for this study. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:261), some rules of thumb about the return/response rate is that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting, 60% is good and 70% is very good.

#### 4.6.2 PERSONAL PROFILE

Questions 1 – 5 of the questionnaire required the respondents to complete the general biographical data, inter alia, gender, age, job level, department and length of service as ADM. The results are presented below:-

##### [1] Gender

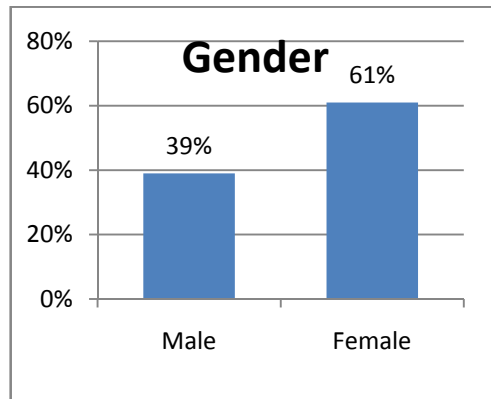


Figure 4.1: Gender Analysis – Own construction

The analysis of the above variable indicates that participants were predominantly females.

##### [2] Age

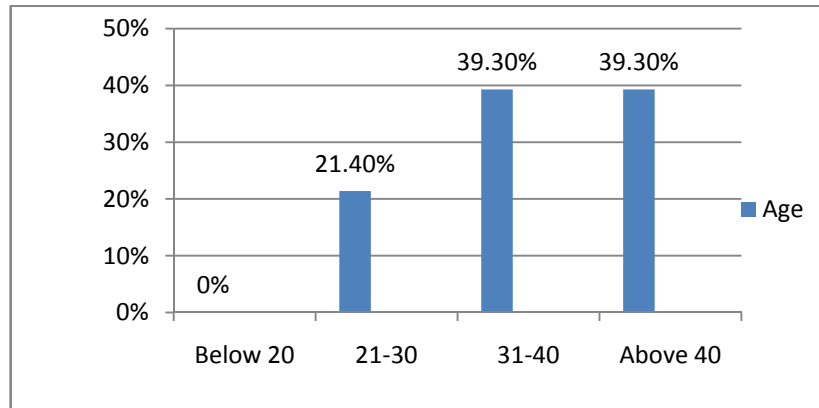
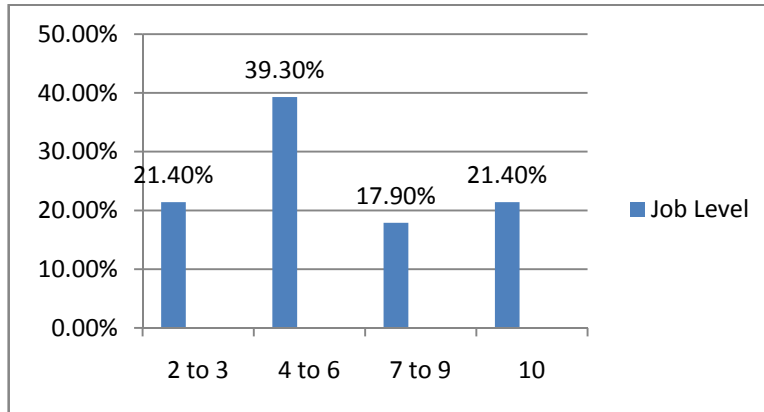


Figure 4.2 – Age Analysis: Own Construction

The above analysis indicates that most participants appeared in the age 21 to 40 plus years.

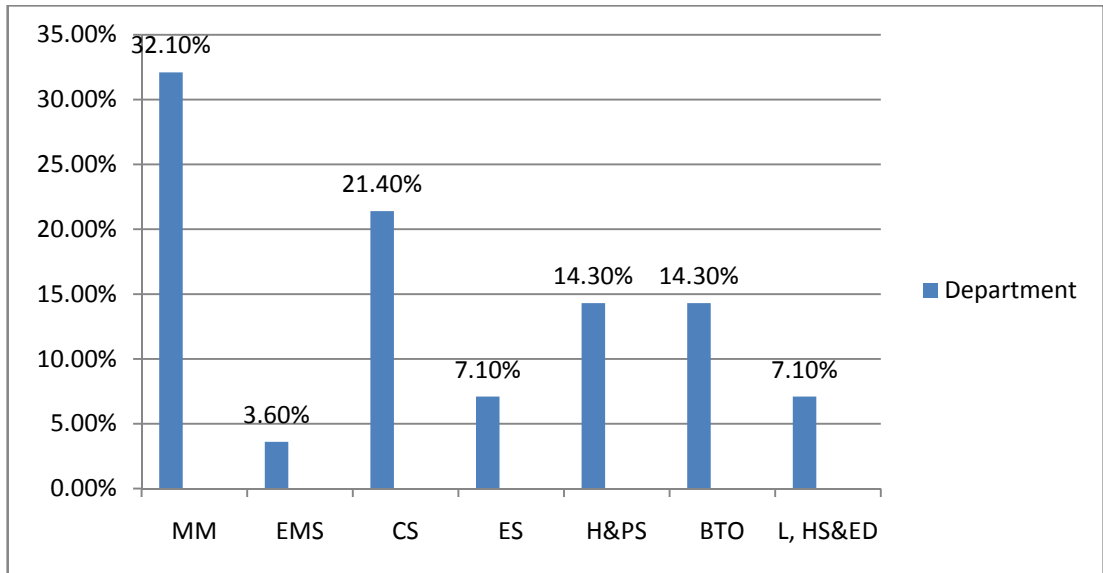
**[3] Job Level**



**Figure 4.3: Job Analysis: Own Construction**

An observation can be made that although the largest proportion of respondents came from the category 4-6, all the job levels under scrutiny were fairly represented.

**[4] Department**

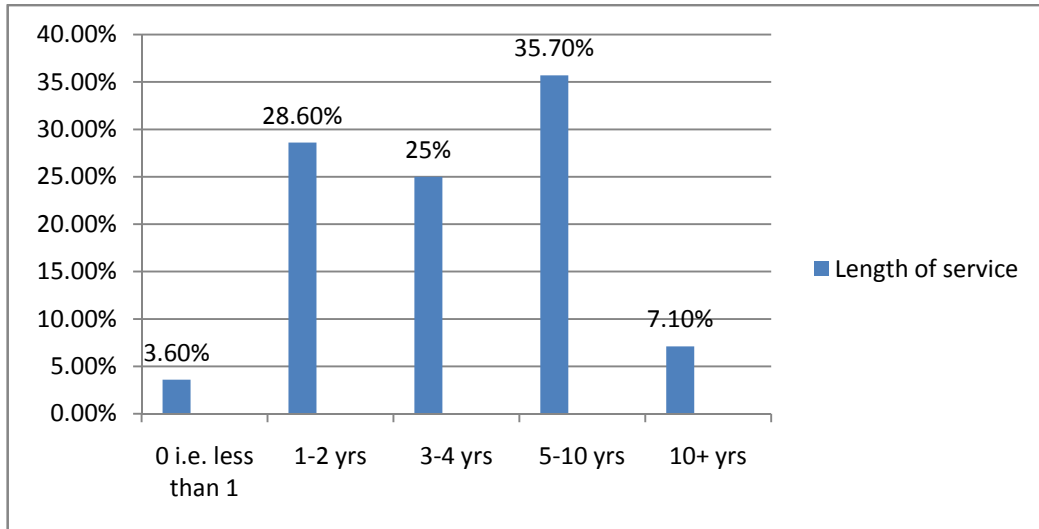


**Figure 4.4: Analysis of department affiliation – Own Construction** (Municipal Manager’s Office (MM), Executive Mayoral Support Services (EMS), Corporate Services (CS), Engineering Services (ES), Health and Protection Services (H&PS), Budget and Treasury Office (BTO) and Land, Human Settlements and Economic Development (L, HS&ED))



From the above analysis it can be seen that all departments were represented, although some departments had a good response rate than others.

**[5] Length of Service at ADM**



**Figure 4.5 – Length of experience at ADM: Own Construction**

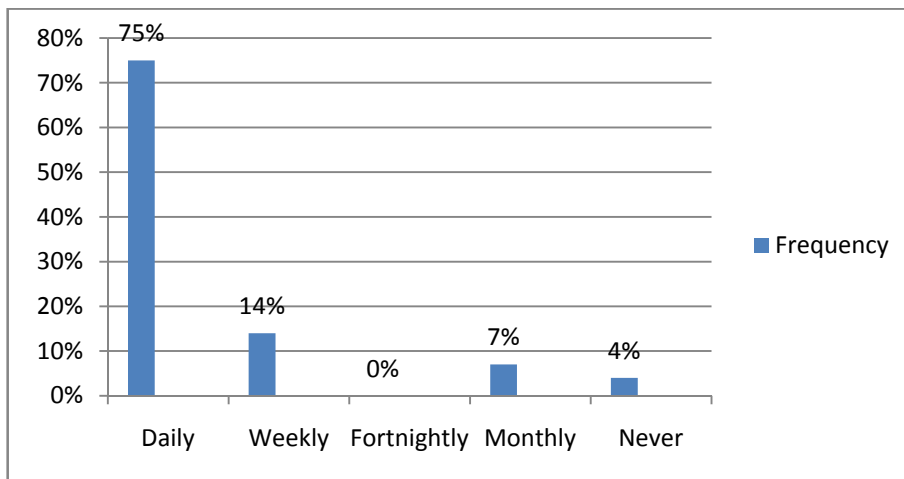
Only 3.6% of respondents were relatively new at ADM, a large proportion had experience of between 1 to more than 10 years. This gives an impression that the selected participants are well versed with ADM policies.

**4.6.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Research results and findings are analysed and interpreted below. All questions were dealt with as it is of value to the overall study. The results are presented in the column graph form in the same order and numbering as the questionnaire. The Microsoft Office Word programme was used to generate the graphs.

**[7] How frequently do you deal with correspondence in the performance of your duties?**

Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentage
Daily	21	75%
Weekly	4	14%
Fortnightly	0	0%
Monthly	2	7%
Never	1	4%
Total	28	100%

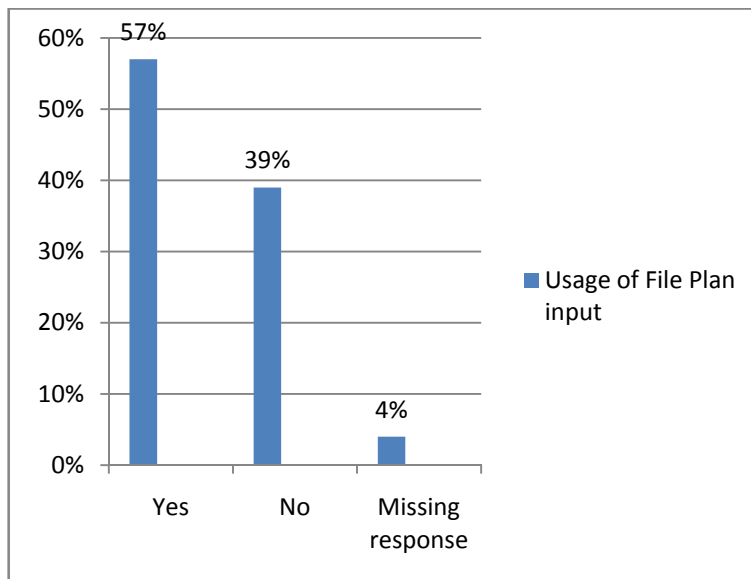


**Figure 4.6 : Frequency of Dealing with correspondence – Own Construction**

As indicated in Chapter 2, all government officials depend on records for information needed for the day to day administration and management. It is interesting to note from the survey results that a majority of respondents (75%) deal with correspondence on a daily basis. This confirms that records are among the key resources in an organization, hence they need to be maintained and enhanced through appropriate records management. This finding correlates with the hypothesis of the study.

**[8] Do you use or refer to the File Plan when creating correspondence?  
If yes why, if no why?**

Response	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	16	57%
No	11	39%
Missing response	1	4%
Total	28	100%



**Figure 4.7 – Frequency of using file plan – Own construction**

Although most respondents (57%) indicated that they refer to the File Plan when creating their correspondence, 39% for non-use of the File Plan is quite an alarming percentage. As discussed in Chapter Three, a file plan provides means of knowing what records exist and where they are kept. The results reflected in Figure 4.7 simply implies that 39% of ADM officials do not include file reference numbers when creating documents and that may lead to mislocation and illegal destruction of documents. This negatively impacts on the entire records management process as creation is the first stage of the records management lifecycle. 57% of the respondents indicated that they use the File Plan to ensure correct filing and easy/quick retrieval of documents, for easy access to information and for future reference purposes. 39% of the respondents

indicated that they were either not aware of the existence of the File Plan or were not sure how it works.

The above scenario sends a signal to ADM's management, that a lot of work still needs to be done to improve records management practices at ADM. If one misses the first step of any process, that entire process is likely to fail. Adequate training of all records users is a crucial component of ensuring sound records management, as alluded in Chapter Three.

**[9] How often do you forward correspondence generated by yourself to the records office for filing purposes?**

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Always	5	18%
Sometimes	9	32%
Seldom	6	21%
Never	7	25%
Missing Response	1	4%
Total	28	100%

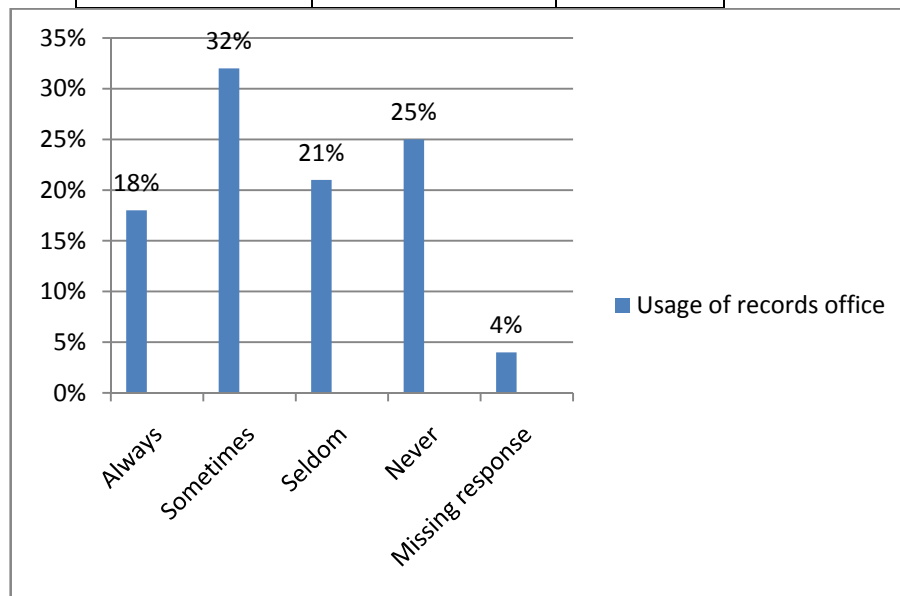


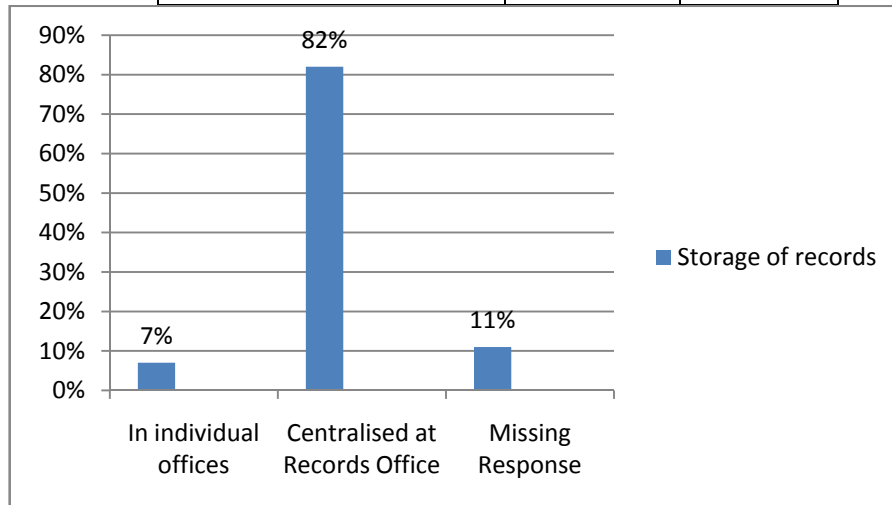
Figure 4.8 – Usage of records office – Own construction

In Chapter 2, it was mentioned that records provide information for different organizational purposes and they should therefore always be accurate, authentic, reliable and accessible. The above analysis depicts a gloomy picture as it indicates that only a few officials always forward correspondence to the records office for filing purposes (18%). 25% of respondents never forward correspondence and that is a high figure.

There is a significant contrast between responses in Question 8 and Question 9. In Question 8, 57% of respondents confirmed that they make use of the file plan when creating correspondence and the common reason that was cited was easy filing, retrieval and access to information. Alarming, responses in Question 9 reveal that only a few officials forward correspondence to the records office on a frequent basis. The danger in not forwarding correspondence to the records office is the likelihood of losing valuable records as it would be easy for officials to destroy them when they want to clear up space in their offices. Further to that, transparency, accountability and governance cannot be sustained. In essence, records kept in individual offices cannot serve the purpose they were created for, inter alia, promoting good governance, supporting democratic accountability, supporting continuing service delivery, serving as evidence in litigation cases and ensuring sound financial management. Compliance with legislation such as the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act 43 of 1996, Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000, Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000, Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003, Auditor-General Act 12 of 1995 and all other legislation regulating local government, cannot be ensured as well.

**[10] In your view where should records be kept for easy access?  
Motivate your answer.**

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
In individual offices	2	7%
Centralised at Records Office	23	82%
Missing Response	3	11%
Total	28	100%



**Figure 4.9: Storage of records – Own construction**

The majority of the participants (82%) felt that records should be centralized at the records office and cited the following reasons (summarized):

- Easy access by all, even if an official is absent from work or has resigned;
- Ensuring security and safekeeping of records;
- Ensuring compliance with legislation;
- Records Office is the custodian of records; and
- For transparency.

7% of the respondents felt that records kept in individual offices are easily accessed by that particular individual when he/she needs them. 11% of the respondents ticked both boxes and indicated that they felt that records should be kept at both individual offices and the records office. As the instructions clearly stated, one should provide one answer per question

and no provision was made for the “both” option, these responses were counted as missing.

Questions 9 and 10 are interrelated. However, a sharp contrast is noticeable in that although the majority of respondents (82%) admitted in Question 9 that they sometimes, or seldom or never forward correspondence to the records office, a large proportion of the same respondents (82%) acknowledge the importance of centralizing record-keeping. This illustrates that most officials are aware of legislative prescripts in as far as good record-keeping is concerned, but choose to play ignorant or there might be an internal problem within ADM.

**[10] Do you understand the requirements of ADM’s Records Management Policy or the National Archives and Records Service Act 43 of 1996, with regard to record keeping? If yes, briefly explain your understanding.**

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	13	46%
No	15	54%
Total	28	100%

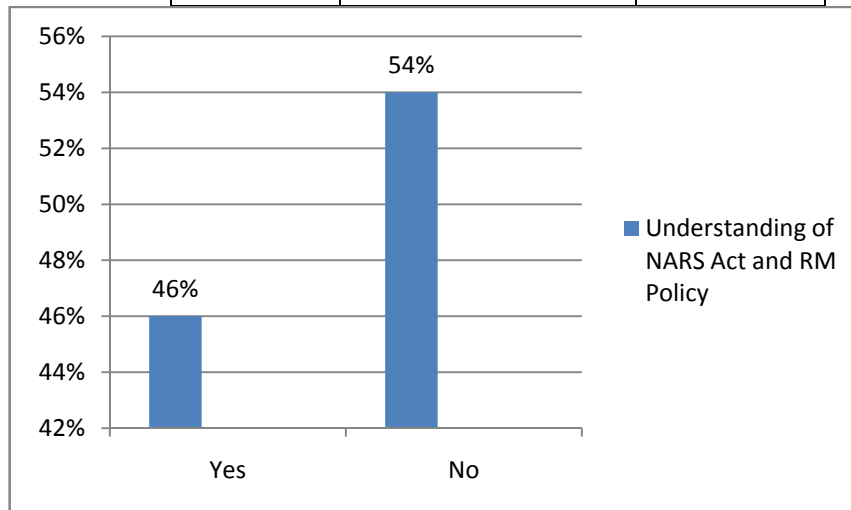


Figure 4.10: Understanding of the NARS Act and RM Policy – Own construction

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the majority of respondents (54%) do not understand the requirements of ADM’s Records

Management Policy and the NARS Act, with regard to record-keeping. 46% of the respondents indicated that they understood the Policy and/or the Act and their responses were reflective of the following aspects which they thought are entailed in the Act and the Policy (summarised):

- Maintenance of institutional memory;
- Organisations should exercise proper care and management of records;
- Development of the File Plan and the Records Management Policy and alignment of procedures and processes with the NARS Act; and
- The Act regulates the acquisition, maintenance, security, safe-custody, retrieval and disposal of records.

One of the main responsibilities of the Records Manager as extensively discussed in Chapter 3, is to develop and manage an organization-wide records management programme designed to ensure that ADM's records management practices comply with the requirements of the NARS Act. If the majority of ADM officials do not even understand the requirements of the Act, it means that ADM's Records Manager has a momentous task to perform.



[11] The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is a strategic plan aimed at ensuring service delivery and development in a municipality. Would you say records management play any role in the IDP? If yes why, if no why?

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	27	96%
No	1	4%
Total		

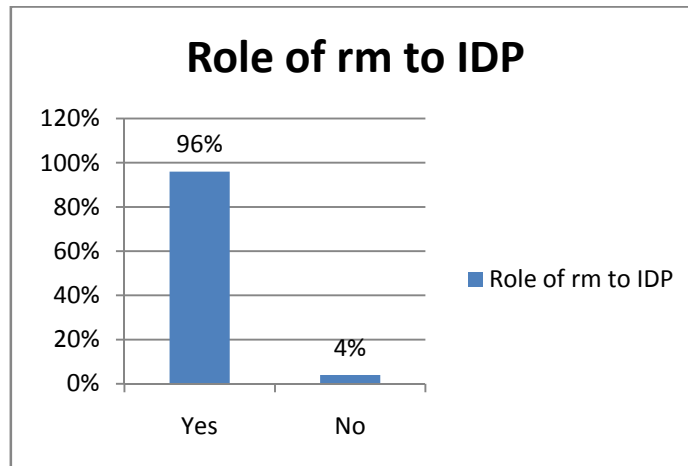


Figure 4.11: Role of records management to IDP – Own construction

As reflected in Figure 4.11, 96% of the respondents confirm that records management play a significant role throughout the stages of the IDP, as discussed in Chapter One and Three. The respondents supported their responses as follows:

- Reference is made to the master copies of previous years' IDPs during the development of the current IDP (**development stage**);
- Records management assist organisations to avoid duplication of services during the **implementation stage**;
- Documents are used to measure performance towards realisation of goals set in the IDP (**monitoring stage**);
- Documents on IDP programmes and projects are kept at Records office for **evaluation and reviewal** purposes; and
- Accessibility of information by the public to encourage public participation which is crucial at the **development stage**.

From the afore-going discussion, it can be highlighted that records contain institutional memory which is useful for the entire IDP process.

However, 4% of the respondents are of the view that records management does not play any role in the IDP as institutions survive even if there is no records management system in place.

**[12] What is the impact of records management in decision-making?**

89% of the respondents answered this question, 11% were either not sure or left the space blank. Responses provided by participants are summarised below:

- Records management facilitates public participation in the decision-making process, particularly when decisions affect people's rights;
- Records management facilitates the timely and efficient (informed) decision-making and thereby fast track service delivery;
- Records contain the institutional memory which is used to inform future decisions;
- When legal action is instituted against certain decisions, records are produced as evidence;
- Sound records management increases the accountability of decision-makers; and
- Records avoid duplication of decisions already taken.

The above statements re-iterate the fundamental role played by records management in an organization, as elaborated on in Chapters One-Three.

[13] The Batho Pele Principles were effected to improve the delivery of public services to the citizens of South Africa. Is there any role played by records management in the implementation of the Batho Pele Principles? Motivate your answer.

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	27	96%
No	1	4%
Total	28	100%

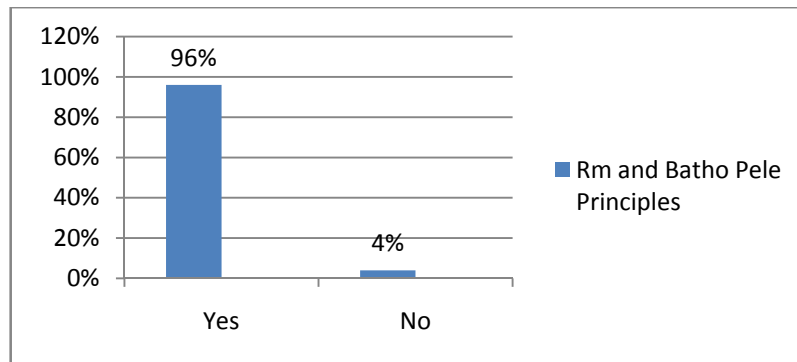


Figure 4.12 : Records Management and Batho Pele Principles – Own construction

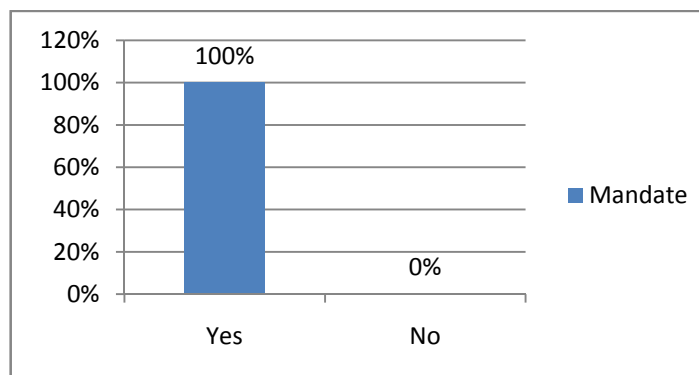
Respondents had to motivate their answers, to indicate the relevance of records management to the Batho Pele Principles and the motivations are summarised below:

- Records contain full, accurate and up-to-date information about public services people are entitled to and the public should access this information (**Access, Information and Service Standard**);
- When consulting the communities, government officials should produce comprehensive information about plans, budget, progress report and work accomplished (**Consultation**);
- Can track if a public inquiry was responded to through the records office (**Redress**);
- Records management assist in saving money by not repeating things that have already been done (**Value for Money**); and
- Records management promotes transparency and openness (**Openness and Transparency**).

From the above analysis, it can be deduced that records management plays a vital role in implementing and upholding the Batho Pele Principles, as 96% of the respondents concur with this view and their explanation of the relationship between the two variables is convincing.

**[14] Do you regard records as one of the important resources that would enable ADM to carry out its mandate effectively? If yes why, if no why?**

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	28	100%
No	0	0%
Total	28	100%



**Figure 4.13: Records management in ADM's mandate**

All respondents regard records as one of the important resources in enabling ADM to carry out its mandate effectively, due to the following:

- Records ensure orderly and efficient flow of information that enables ADM officials to perform their functions successfully and efficiently;
- Institutional memory assists in improving the way things are done;
- Records form the basis for formulating policies, future plans and making informed decisions;
- Consultation, in which availability of records is important, is crucial in good service delivery;
- Without records, an organization cannot function;

- Records help fast-track service delivery as information is readily available; and
- Having accurate and up-to-date information ensures a better service to the communities.

Based on the valid points raised above, it is quite interesting to note that all respondents acknowledge that sound records management is central to the success of an organisation. The question that arises is why are records management practices at ADM not good, if its employees are cognisant of the importance of the records management function?

**[15] In your opinion is records management receiving the attention it deserves at ADM? Motivate your answer.**

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	9	32%
No	19	68%
Total	28	100%

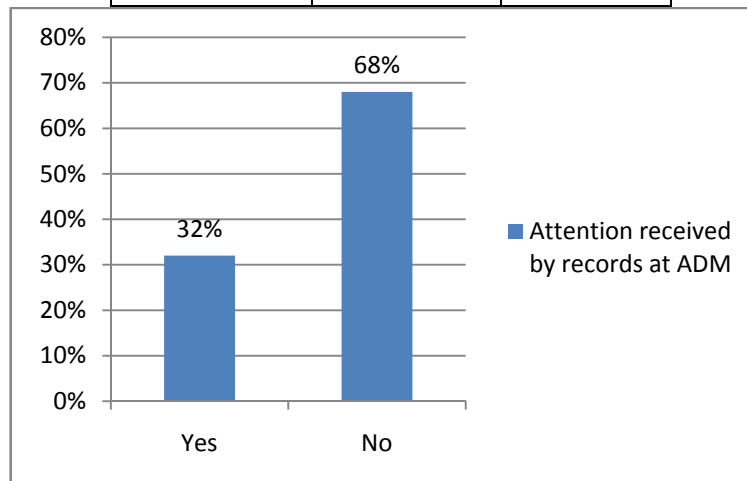


Figure 4.1.4: Attention received by records at ADM – Own construction.

68% of the respondents were not convinced that records management is receiving the attention at ADM, and they attributed this to demotivated, untrained and uncooperative records office staff, lack of awareness campaigns or training, lack of support from top management, lack of

orientation of new ADM employees and not enforcing the Records Management Policy. The remaining 32%, however, view records office staff as dedicated and well-equipped, records management is included in the institution's induction programme, bi-monthly meetings are held to share ideas on records management and there is a good Records Management Policy but it needs to be enforced.

The interpretation of the data as presented in the statistical order and words makes the researcher to conclude that records management is not receiving the attention it deserves at ADM. The picture portrayed in the above discussion boils down to what was mentioned earlier, that a lot of work still needs to be done to improve ADM's records management practices.

**[16] Can you make any suggestion with regard to the improvement of the current records management practices at ADM?**

Out of 28 respondents, only 24 (86%) provided suggestions on the improvement of ADM's current records management practices, the remaining 14% either left the space blank or indicated that they had no suggestions. The recommendations will be discussed in Chapter Five.

#### **4.6.4 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

A brief summary of the findings derived from the results presented in the preceding discussion is outlined below. It is necessary to summarise the findings to be able to recommend best practices in ensuring sound records management, which follows in the next chapter. The research questions that were posed in Chapter One were taken into consideration, and it will be established whether the survey results attempted to address them. It is worth noting that the survey results presented more weaknesses in ADM's records management practices than strengths. The summary of the findings is sub-divided into topics, as follows:

**[1] Usage of the File Plan**

Proper usage of and understanding a file plan is fundamental to ensuring an effective records management system. The file plan guides officials on the allocation of file reference numbers for easy filing and retrieval. Only 57% of respondents indicated that they make use of the file plan. The fact that the remaining 43% of respondents do not use a file plan should be a wake-up call to ADM's management since it can lead to disastrous situations in the future.

**[2] Storage of records**

Section 10 (1) of the NARS Regulations (R1458, 2002.11.20) deals extensively with the proper management, care and storage of records. ADM's Records Management Policy further stipulates clearly that the records office is the official location where information resources are kept. Nevertheless, only 18% of respondents confirmed that they always forward correspondence to the records office, the rest (82%) occasionally or never forward the correspondence to the records office. Interestingly, 82% of the respondents agree that records should be kept at the records office as against the 7%, who are of the view that they should be kept in individual offices. This inconsistency shows that there might be reasons why ADM employees prefer to keep records in their offices, though they are aware that they should be kept at the records office. It is the duty of ADM's management is to identify the root cause of this problem.

**[3] Compliance with prescripts regulating records management**

The majority of the respondents (54%) do not understand the requirements of ADM's Records Management Policy or the NARS Act, as against 46% who confirmed their understanding. There is a little chance of complying with these prescripts if there is a lack of understanding. Records users are the main role-players in ensuring sound records

management and they should comply with applicable legislation at all times.

**[4] Records management and ADM's Strategic Plan (IDP)**

96% of the respondents agreed that records play a significant role throughout the stages of IDP as they contain institutional memory which is useful in the realization of goals set in the IDP.

**[5] The impact of records management in decision-making**

89% of the respondents who answered this question confirmed the vital impact of effective records management in decision-making. Effective records management facilitate timely and efficient decision-making, promote public participation, inform future decisions, produce evidence in litigation cases, increases accountability of decision-makers and fast-track service delivery.

**[6] Role of records management in the implementation of the Batho Pele Principles**

96% of the respondents believe that records management plays a crucial role in the implementation of Batho Pele Principles. It must be emphasised that without a proper records management system, the Batho Pele Principles cannot be implemented or upheld.

**[7] Contribution of records management towards effective administration at ADM**

All respondents (100%) agree that records management contributes towards effective administration at ADM, and consequently towards effective and efficient delivery of services to the communities. Respondents stated that records management ensures the orderly and efficient flow of information which enables ADM officials to perform their



functions successfully and efficiently. Records management also form the basis for formulating policies, future plans and informed decision-making. Without records, an organization cannot operate.

From this analysis the relationship is evident between the two variables, namely, records management and effective administration of a service oriented organization, and the hypothesis has been tested to be true.

#### **[8] Current records management practices at ADM**

The opinion of a large proportion of the respondents (68%) is that records management at ADM is not receiving the attention it deserves. Some of the reasons cited for this view are non-usage of the File Plan, lack of training of both records office staff and users (staff), unskilled and demotivated records office staff and lack of support from top management.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

The objective of this chapter was to document the research methodology selected for this study. The research made use of the quantitative research methodology, the survey to be particular, due to its suitability for the type of inquiry being conducted. The questionnaire, which contained mostly closed-ended questions, was designed in a manner that compels the respondents to reveal the short-comings and inadequacies of ADM's current records management practices. The rationale for the data-gathering method was described and explained, as well as the problems that were encountered as a result of using self-administered questionnaires.

Finally, the survey results were presented and analysed, and findings were reported on. From the findings of this survey, it can be deduced that there are still avenues for improving ADM's records management practices, as survey results presented more weaknesses in the records management system than strengths. Commitment and effort should be exerted by all different role players,

*inter alia*, top management, records users, Records Manager and records office staff.

In the next and final chapter, a summary of the study will be presented and deductions and recommendations on the best practices of ensuring effective or sound records management at ADM, will be made.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter concentrated on the discussion of the research methodology that was followed to conduct the study and the empirical survey results and findings. The primary research question, which sought to establish whether the management of records, as one of the valuable resources, receives the attention it deserves at ADM, was addressed through the discussions of the preceding chapters and the findings of the empirical survey.

This chapter seeks to summarise the study, draw final conclusions and make recommendations on the best practices of ensuring sound records management at ADM.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

Records management is a function that is generally underestimated and is always aligned with low level officials. Conversely, records management is a process of maintaining and enhancing information, and information is a fundamental resource to both private and public sectors alike. Records are essential to the administration of local government as they contain the information that keeps government programmes functioning.

The main objective of this study was to investigate the role played by records management in an organisation. The primary question that was explored was whether the management of records receives the attention it deserves at ADM. By conducting this study, the aim of the researcher was to create awareness and sensitise public servants, particularly municipal officials, that ineffective management of records indirectly affects the performance of an organisation and may have adverse effects on the delivery of services, by either delaying or hampering the service delivery process. The empirical survey formed part of the

study since the users' behaviour, attitudes and characteristics were central to the study.

Chapter One presented a general introduction to the study, which focused on the investigation of the role played by records management with specific reference to Amathole District Municipality (ADM). The chapter provided the background, problem statement, research objectives, hypothesis, research methodology and an overview of the chapters, amongst others.

Chapter Two reviewed relevant books, articles, applicable legislation and other publications on the topic. The concepts record, public record and records management were defined and the different roles played by sound records management in an organisation were discussed. The statutory and regulatory framework for records management was also examined.

Chapter Three critically analysed the current records management practices at ADM. The researcher examined these practices against the legislative framework regulating the management of public records.

Chapter Four outlined the research methodology adopted in this study. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants and the questionnaire consisted of mostly closed-ended questions. A sample of thirty-five (35) participants was selected to represent the entire ADM population. This chapter further analysed the results of the empirical survey and discussed the survey findings. The study revealed that the records management function is not receiving the attention it deserves at ADM.

Chapter Five summarises the study and seeks to recommend the best practices of ensuring effective management of records. The recommendations are discussed further, and an attempt is made to link the recommendations to specific findings.

### 5.3 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations will be made on the findings emanating from the discussions in Chapter Three as well as within the context of the empirical surveys.

#### 5.3.1 **RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LEGISLATION**

##### 5.3.1.1 **NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICES OF SOUTH AFRICA ACT 43 OF 1996**

###### [a] **Designation of the Records Manager**

**Findings:** ADM is compliant with the provisions of Section 13(5)(a) of the NARS Act, which requires that a Records Manager be designated.

**Recommendations:** It is recommended that the Records Manager be provided with adequate training to ensure that this official is able to undertake the full responsibilities of the post. The position of the Records Manager is crucial as this official is entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the welfare of the organisation's records. Also, to ensure improvement of ADM's records management practices, the Records Manager should be dedicated only to the records management function.

###### [b] **Registries**

**Findings:** As discussed in chapter 3, ADM consist of three registries, the main registry and two sub-registries at the Human Resources Division and the Budget and Treasury Office. Also, ADM established seven satellite offices in its area of jurisdiction. Officials in these offices deal with correspondence in the performance of their duties, but there is no formal arrangement pertaining to the management of records. This is one of the key findings of this research.

**Recommendations:** ADM should appoint separate Records Managers for the Budget and Treasury Office, Human Resources and the seven

satellite offices, and they should be charged with the responsibility of ensuring sound records management within their respective divisions. Such Records Managers should remain accountable to the Records Manager of the whole organisation. This will ensure that the Records Manager is aware of what is taking place in these registries and thereby ensure that ADM complies with the NARS Act.

[c] **Records Management Policy and Records Management Procedure Manual**

***Findings:*** ADM currently has a fully compliant Records Management Policy and Records Management Procedure Manual which were approved and adopted by Council in 2003. At the time of conducting this study, the reviewed policy and procedure manual had just been approved by the Provincial Archives and Records Services and were in the process of being taken to the ADM's structures for approval and adoption.

***Recommendations:*** All ADM officials should be workshopped on the Records Management Policy and the Procedure Manual and the two documents should be posted onto ADM's intranet for easy access. During the reviewal of the two documents, comments should be invited from all ADM officials to ensure their involvement in the process.

[d] **Records Classification Systems**

**File Plan**

***Findings:*** ADM is in compliance with the Act. A file plan approved in 2003 is in existence and the file plan is currently posted on ADM's intranet for easy access.

***Recommendations:*** In line with the above recommendations, ADM officials should be continuously workshopped on how to use the file plan.

## **Records Control Schedule**

***Findings:*** No compliance. The Records Control Schedule was still at the drafting stage at the time of conducting this study. This implies that there is no record of what records, other than correspondence, exist at ADM and where they are kept.

***Recommendations:*** ADM to speed up the process of developing a Records Control Schedule so as to be able to control and manage all ADM records and prevent unauthorised removal and destruction of records.

### **[e] Control Registers**

#### **Register of files opened**

***Findings:*** No compliance. No existence of the register, implying that ADM does not have a record of the number of files in its possession per subject, and how many volumes per file.

***Recommendations:*** A register of all files that were opened since the adoption of the current file plan needs to be developed. This will also make the work of records office staff easier when requested to retrieve a file, to check first whether that particular file exists or not.

#### **Register of file movements**

***Findings:*** The register of file movements is currently in existence. However, there is no proper control and monitoring, officials keep borrowed files in their offices for long periods.

***Recommendations:*** It should be stipulated that borrowed files should not be kept for more than three (3) days and this should be communicated to officials, particularly at the time when they borrow a file. Records office staff should closely monitor this register and make constant follow-ups with officials who do not return the files after the stipulated timeframe.

[f] **Training**

**Findings:** Training is identified by NARS as one of the crucial elements in ensuring sound records management but there is no adequate training for the Records Manager, records office staff and records users.

**Recommendations:** It is recommended that training programmes on records management be intensified at ADM. Training should be provided to the Records Manager, records office staff and users in general.

Training and development opportunities should be created for the Records Manager in particular. As required by NARS's Records Management Policy Manual (2003:10), it should be arranged that the Records Manager attends the records management course and/or any other training sessions provided to Records Managers by NARS. This training is necessary to equip the Records Manager with skills to enable this official to drive a successful records management programme. The Records Manager should also be encouraged to subscribe to the professional body of South African Records Managers, to be kept abreast about the developments in the field. ADM should further consider providing financial assistance to the Records Manager in this regard, since this will benefit the institution as a whole.

In an effort to improve records management practices at ADM, the Records Manager should be supported by competent and well trained staff. ADM's Records Manager should arrange continuous training sessions for records office staff, to ensure that they are equipped with knowledge and skills to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently.

ADM should continue with the induction of new staff members regarding the records management function. Training should not end there and a continuing programme of records management training should be established. The training should encompass all the important aspects for an effective records management programme including, *inter alia*, File



Plan, Records Management Policy and Procedure Manual, Records Control Schedule and Promotion of Access to Information Manual. The Records Management Committee which meets bi-monthly to discuss challenges affecting the records management function, should also continue and representatives should be encouraged to report back to their departments. Moreover, ADM should ensure that record keeping responsibilities of individual employees are continuously communicated to them and documented.

**[g] Disposal of Records**

**Findings:** There is no effective disposal programme at ADM resulting in a challenge of space. Inactive records dating back to the 1930's, which are no longer required for administrative purposes are still retained and due to space challenges are kept at an off-site storage facility which does not fully conform to archival standards.

**Recommendations:** ADM needs to firstly apply for a disposal authority for the old file plan that was closed in 2003, so that records with an archival value can be transferred to the archival custody and the ones with no archival value can be destroyed. Once this process is completed, a disposal authority for the current file plan should be obtained and the disposal process be effected. Thereafter, it should be ensured that the transfer and destruction of records is carried out on a routine basis.

**[h] Risk Management Programme**

**Findings:** The non-involvement of the Records Manager in the ADM's risk management programme despite the responsibility assigned to this official in terms of the NARS's Policy Manual (2003:35), which is to ensure that records are protected against all risks. Also, there is no Records Management Disaster Prevention and Recovery Plan in place as required by NARS, which spells out a plan of mitigating the risk of permanently losing all records, both paper-based and electronic, in cases of disaster.

**Recommendations:** ADM should ensure that the Records Manager participates in the risk management programme so as to ensure that all records management related risks are brought to the attention of management and are included in strategic and budget plans. Furthermore, it is critical that a Records Management Disaster Prevention and Recovery Plan be developed to prevent the disruption of ADM's critical operations should a disaster occur. Since this is a critical factor, it is advised that it be incorporated into the organisation-wide strategic plans. The Records Manager will require the cooperation of the Information Technology Manager with regard to the electronic records.

[i] **Strategic Planning**

**Findings:** Records management is not reflected in the ADM's Integrated Development Plan as one of the strategic objectives.

**Recommendations:** Due to its vital contribution in enabling ADM to carry out its mandate effectively, the records management function should be included in ADM's strategic plans. The development of a records management strategic plan should be identified as one of the key objectives in the Integrated Development Plan.

### **5.3.1.2 ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSACTION ACT 25 OF 2002**

**Findings:** Inadequate guidance or training of ADM staff on the handling of e-mailed documents. Also, ADM did not notify the National or Provincial Archivist of its intentions to introduce or revive the electronic document management system, as per the requirements of NARS.

**Recommendations:** As the Email Usage Policy was initiated by the Information Technology Division and only deals with the usage of the email facility, it is recommended that a separate Electronic Mail Policy be developed. Such a policy should encompass all the aspects pertaining to the handling of email documents. Further, ADM should notify the Provincial Archivist in writing of its intention to revive the electronic document management system, to ensure that

all the requirements regarding storage and the format for long term accessibility of archival records are built into the electronic system in the planning phase.

#### **5.3.1.3 PROMOTION OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 2 OF 2000**

**Findings:** ADM's Promotion of Access to Information manual has never been reviewed since its adoption in 2003 despite many institutional developments that have since taken place. In addition to that, both the Information Officer and the Deputy Information Officer reflected in the manual have since left the institution. Furthermore, records office staff and ADM staff in general were never workshopped on the manual, as a result records office staff do not know what procedures are followed when members of the public make requests for information, and certain officials are not aware of the existence of the Promotion of Access to Information manual.

**Recommendations:** ADM should review and update the Promotion of Access to Information manual to reflect the true state of affairs at ADM, and the current Municipal Manager and Director: Corporate Services should be designated as Information Officer and Deputy Information Officer, respectively. Also, the Promotion of Access to Information manual should form part of the training programme on records management to prevent situations where officials could disclose information that could harm the organisation or infringe the privacy rights of individuals.

#### **5.3.1.4 PROMOTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE ACT 3 OF 2000**

**Findings:** Although ADM complies with the Act, certain officials are not aware of its existence.

**Recommendations:** All staff must be made aware of the Act and its implications for public records.

#### **5.3.1.5 MUNICIPAL FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT 56 OF 2003**

**Findings:** ADM acts in compliance with the Act.

**Recommendations:** A synergy should be created between the financial record keeping system (records kept at the Budget and Treasury Office) and the institution wide record keeping system.

### **5.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF EMPIRICAL SURVEY FINDINGS**

This section will focus on areas that have not been covered in the above discussions.

#### **5.3.2.1 NON-USAGE OF THE FILE PLAN**

**Findings:** The empirical survey findings have revealed that almost half of ADM officials do not use the file plan because they are either not aware of its existence or do not know how to use it.

**Recommendations:** As discussed above, regular training of staff on the use of the file plan is essential since the file plan is a source of reference for the allocation of file reference numbers.

#### **5.3.2.2 STORAGE OF RECORDS**

**Findings:** The majority of officials keep documents in their offices despite their indication that they are cognisant of the fact that they should be kept at the records office.

**Recommendations:** Staff should be informed to refrain from keeping documents in their offices as this is in transgression of the NARS Act. As incompetency and lack of co-operation by records office staff was raised as a concern by certain respondents, management should train records office staff on customer care as they deal with people on a daily basis. Records office staff should also be equipped with knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their duties effectively and efficiently. In addition to that, management should also inculcate a sense of ownership by staff generally to erase the perception that records management is the responsibility of records office staff only. The introduction of an electronic document management system could also serve as

a control measure for ensuring care and safe custody of records. Also, documents could also be easily retrieved.

### **5.3.2.3 CURRENT RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT ADM**

***Findings:*** The empirical survey results revealed that records management plays a significant role in the entire Integrated Development Plan process, decision-making process, realisation of the Batho Pele Principles and towards effective administration and performance of ADM. Nonetheless, the records management function is not receiving the attention it deserves. Further to that, there is lack of support from senior management.

***Recommendations:*** As recommended above, the records management function should be incorporated into the organisation-wide strategic planning initiatives. Most importantly, senior management should embrace the records management function to ensure its effectiveness. In order to ensure the commitment of Heads of Departments to the records management function, record management should be incorporated into their performance management targets.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The management of records must be recognised as being one of the key and vital functions that contribute towards the realisation of the organisational goals. Local government in South Africa is faced with the challenge of lack of service delivery and this is manifested through violent protests that have broken out in communities across the country in recent months. Lack of service delivery can be attributed to various factors such as non-payment for basic services, mismanagement of public funds, corruption and many others. This study has revealed that better performance and enhancement of service delivery can be attained through the application of effective records management practices and systems, amongst other things. Future research could possible cover the following areas:

- Role of records management in improving accountability;

- The contribution of records management in fighting corruption; and
- The importance of training in ensuring sound records management.

## 5.5 **CONCLUSION**

The main aim of the research was to conduct an investigation on the role of records management, with specific reference to Amathole District Municipality (ADM). The research was based on the hypothesis that effective records management plays a significant role in the effective administration of a service oriented organisation and the primary research question was whether the management of records receives the attention it deserves at ADM.

The study has revealed that records management does play a significant role in various aspects including, *inter alia*, risk management process, strategic planning process, bettering performance and improving service delivery, promoting good governance, supporting democratic accountability, fulfilling legal requirements, combating corruption, promoting and protecting human rights and ensuring sound financial management. Nonetheless, based on the empirical survey findings, it can be concluded that records management is not receiving the attention it deserves at ADM. In its endeavours to improve its records management practices, it is proposed that ADM consider the findings and recommendations of this study.

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