

Report of the auditor-general to the Free State Provincial Legislature and the council on the Xhariep District Municipality

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

1. I have audited the financial statements of the Xhariep District Municipality set out on pages xx to xx which comprise the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, statement of financial performance, statement of changes in net assets, cash flow statement and statement of comparison of budget and actual amounts for the year then ended, as well as notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.
2. In my opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Xhariep District Municipality as at 30 June 2024 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the Standards of Generally Recognised Accounting Practice (GRAP) and the requirements of the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA) and the Division of Revenue Act 5 of 2023 (Dora).

Basis for opinion

3. I conducted my audit in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the responsibilities of the auditor-general for the audit of the financial statements section of my report.
4. I am independent of the municipality in accordance with the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' *International code of ethics for professional accountants (including International Independence Standards)* (IESBA code) as well as other ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit in South Africa. I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements and the IESBA code.
5. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Emphasis of matters

6. I draw attention to the matters below. My opinion is not modified with respect to these matters.

Close call relating to going concern

7. Note 35 in the financial statements, which deals with the possible effects of the future implications of continuing deterioration in operational results on the municipality's prospects, performance and cash flows.

Unauthorised expenditure

8. As disclosed in note 37 to the financial statements, unauthorised expenditure of R12 670 102 (2023: R6 724 033) was incurred, due to overspending of the budget.

Irregular expenditure

9. As disclosed in note 39 to the financial statements, irregular expenditure of R4 168 088 (2023: R1 295 694) was incurred, due to non-compliance with supply chain management (SCM) requirements.

Restatement of corresponding figures

10. As disclosed in note 46 to the financial statements, the corresponding figures for 30 June 2023 were restated as a result of errors in the financial statements of the municipality at, and for the year ended, 30 June 2024.

Other matters

11. I draw attention to the matter below. My opinion is not modified with respect to this matter.

Unaudited disclosure notes

12. In terms of section 125(2)(e) of the MFMA, the particulars of non-compliance with the MFMA should be disclosed in the financial statements. This disclosure requirement did not form part of the audit of the financial statements and, accordingly, I do not express an opinion on it.

Responsibilities of the accounting officer for the financial statements

13. The accounting officer is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the Standards of GRAP and the requirements of the MFMA and Dora; and for such internal control as the accounting officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
14. In preparing the financial statements, the accounting officer is responsible for assessing the municipality's ability to continue as a going concern; disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern; and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the appropriate governance structure either intends to liquidate the municipality or to cease operations or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Responsibilities of the auditor-general for the audit of the financial statements

15. My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance

but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

16. A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is included in the annexure to this auditor's report. This description, which is located on page 11, forms part of our auditor's report.

Report on the annual performance report

17. In accordance with the Public Audit Act 25 of 2004 (PAA) and the general notice issued in terms thereof, I must audit and report on the usefulness and reliability of the reported performance information against predetermined objectives for the selected material performance indicators presented in the annual performance report. The accounting officer is responsible for the preparation of the annual performance report.

18. I selected the following material performance indicators related to basic service delivery and infrastructure development presented in the annual performance report for the year ended 30 June 2024. I selected those indicators that measure the municipality's performance on its primary mandated functions and that are of significant national, community or public interest.

- ensure that the water quality tests are done quarterly
- total number of water samples tested
- number of water sample tests that complied with SANS 241 requirements
- total wastewater samples tested for all determinants over the municipal financial year
- number of wastewater samples tested per determinant that meet compliance with specified water use licence requirements
- percentage of RRAMS grant spent on a quarterly basis
- number of reports to management/council on implementation of RRAMS project
- number of reports on funeral parlours compliance status
- number of food premises inspected per local municipality
- number of water quality samples collected per local municipality

19. number of quarterly wastewater samples taken per local municipality.

20. I evaluated the reported performance information for the selected material performance indicators against the criteria developed from the performance management and reporting framework, as defined in the general notice. When an annual performance report is prepared using these criteria, it provides useful and reliable information and insights to users on the municipality's planning and delivery on its mandate and objectives.

21. I performed procedures to test whether:

- the indicators used for planning and reporting on performance can be linked directly to the municipality's mandate and the achievement of its planned objectives
- all the indicators relevant for measuring the municipality's performance against its primary mandated and prioritised functions and planned objectives are included
- the indicators are well defined to ensure that they are easy to understand and can be applied consistently, as well as verifiable so that I can confirm the methods and processes to be used for measuring achievements
- the targets can be linked directly to the achievement of the indicators and are specific, timebound and measurable to ensure that it is easy to understand what should be delivered and by when, the required level of performance as well as how performance will be evaluated
- the indicators and targets reported on in the annual performance report are the same as those committed to in the approved initial or revised planning documents
- the reported performance information is presented in the annual performance report in the prescribed manner.
- there is adequate supporting evidence for the achievements reported and for the measures taken to improve performance.

22. I performed the procedures for the purpose of reporting material findings only; and not to express an assurance opinion or conclusion.

23. I did not identify any material findings on the reported performance information for the selected indicators.

Other matters

24. I draw attention to the matters below.

Achievement of planned targets

25. The annual performance report includes information on reported achievements against planned targets and provides measures taken to improve performance.

26. The table that follows provides information on the achievement of planned targets and lists the key service delivery indicators that were not achieved as reported in the annual performance report. The measures taken to improve performance are included in the annual performance report on pages xx to xx

Basic service delivery and infrastructure development

<p><i>Targets achieved: 35%</i></p> <p><i>Budget spent: Undeterminable/Unknown</i></p> <p><i>The budget spent is not available as the municipality's actual spending is not aligned with their key performance areas(programmes)</i></p>		
Key service delivery indicator not achieved	Planned target	Reported achievement
Ensure that water quality tests are done on a quarterly basis	4	3
Total number of water samples tested	396	363
Number of water sample tests that complied with SANS 241 requirements	396	306
Number of wastewater samples tested per determinant that meet compliance to specified water use licence requirements	20	0
Number of reports to management/council on the implementation of the RRAMS project	4	0
Number of water quality samples collected per local municipality (Mohokare)	72	66
Number of water quality samples collected per local municipality (Letsemeng)	108	99
Number of water quality samples collected per local municipality (Kopanong)	216	198

Material misstatements

27. I identified material misstatements in the annual performance report submitted for auditing.

These material misstatements were in the reported performance information for basic service delivery and infrastructure development. Management subsequently corrected all the misstatements and I did not include any material findings in this report.

Report on compliance with legislation

28. In accordance with the PAA and the general notice issued in terms thereof, I must audit and report on compliance with applicable legislation relating to financial matters, financial management and other related matters. The accounting officer is responsible for the municipality's compliance with legislation.

29. I performed procedures to test compliance with selected requirements in key legislation in accordance with the findings engagement methodology of the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA). This engagement is not an assurance engagement. Accordingly, I do not express an assurance opinion or conclusion.
30. Through an established AGSA process, I selected requirements in key legislation for compliance testing that are relevant to the financial and performance management of the municipality, clear to allow consistent measurement and evaluation, while also sufficiently detailed and readily available to report in an understandable manner. The selected legislative requirements are included in the annexure to this auditor's report.
31. The material findings on compliance with the selected legislative requirements, presented per compliance theme, are as follows:

Expenditure management

32. Reasonable steps were not taken to prevent irregular expenditure amounting to R4 168 088 (2023: R1 295 694) as disclosed in note 39 to the annual financial statements, as required by section 62(1)(d) of the MFMA. The majority of the irregular expenditure was caused by non-compliance with SCM requirements.
33. Reasonable steps were not taken to prevent unauthorised expenditure amounting to R12 670 102 (2023: R6 724 033) as disclosed in note 37 to the annual financial statements, as required by section 62(1)(d) of the MFMA. The majority of the unauthorised expenditure was caused by overspending of the budget.
34. Reasonable steps were not taken to prevent fruitless and wasteful expenditure amounting to R255 704 (2023: R398 286) as disclosed in note 38 to the annual financial statements, as required by section 62(1)(d) of the MFMA. The majority of the disclosed fruitless and wasteful expenditure was caused by interest and penalties charged on late payments. ts.
35. Payments were made from the municipality's bank accounts without the approval of a properly authorised official, as required by section 11(1) of the MFMA.
36. Money owed by the municipality was not always paid within 30 days, as required by section 65(2)(e) of the MFMA.

Annual financial statements

37. The financial statements submitted for auditing were not fully prepared in all material respects in accordance with the requirements of section 122(1) of the MFMA. Material misstatements of current assets, current liabilities, revenue, expenditure and disclosure items identified by the auditors in the submitted financial statement were subsequently corrected and the supporting records were provided subsequently, resulting in the financial statements receiving an unqualified audit opinion.

Consequence management

38. Unauthorised expenditure incurred by the municipality was not investigated to determine if any person is liable for the expenditure, as required by section 32(2)(a) of the MFMA.
39. Irregular expenditure incurred by the municipality were not investigated to determine if any person is liable for the expenditure, as required by section 32(2)(b) of the MFMA.
40. Fruitless and wasteful expenditure incurred by the municipality were not investigated to determine if any person is liable for the expenditure, as required by section 32(2)(b) of the MFMA.

Utilisation of conditional grants

41. Performance in respect of programmes funded by Integrated National Electrification Program (INEP) was not evaluated within two months after the end of the financial year, as required by section 12(5) of Dora.
42. The Rural Roads Asset Management System (RRAMS) grant was not spent for its intended purposes in accordance with the applicable grant framework, as required by section 16(1) of Dora.
43. The Municipal Infrastructure Grant was not spent for its intended purposes in accordance with the applicable grant framework, as required by section 16(1) of Dora.

Procurement and contract management

44. Some of the contracts were awarded to bidders based on points given for legislative requirements that differed from those stipulated in the original invitation for bidding, in contravention of SCM regulations 21(b) and 28(1)(a)(i) and the Preferential Procurement Regulations.
45. Sufficient appropriate audit evidence could not be obtained that the performance of contractors or providers was monitored monthly as required by section 116(2) of the MFMA.
46. Sufficient appropriate audit evidence could not be obtained that contract performance and monitoring measures were in place to ensure effective contract management as required by section 116(2)(c)(ii) of the MFMA.

Other information in the annual report

47. The accounting officer is responsible for the other information included in the annual report. The other information referred to does not include the financial statements, the auditor's report and those selected material indicators in the scoped-in key performance area (KPA) presented in the annual performance report that has been specifically reported on in this auditor's report.
48. My opinion on the financial statements, the report on the audit of the annual performance report and the report on compliance with legislation do not cover the other information included

in the annual report and I do not express an audit opinion or any form of assurance conclusion on it.

49. My responsibility is to read this other information and, in doing so, consider whether it is materially inconsistent with the financial statements and the selected material indicators in the scoped-in KPA presented in the annual performance report or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.
50. I did not receive the other information before the date of this auditor's report. When I do receive and read this information, if I conclude that there is a material misstatement therein, I am required to communicate the matter to those charged with governance and request that the other information be corrected. If the other information is not corrected, I may have to retract this auditor's report and re-issue an amended report as appropriate. However, if it is corrected this will not be necessary.

Internal control deficiencies

51. I considered internal control relevant to my audit of the financial statements, annual performance report and compliance with applicable legislation; however, my objective was not to express any form of assurance on it.
52. The matters reported below are limited to the significant internal control deficiencies that resulted in the basis for the opinion and the material findings on compliance with legislation included in this report.
53. Management did not review compliance with the relevant laws and regulations, which resulted in material non compliance being reported.
54. Management did not prepare financial statements that were accurate, and were evidenced by the reliable supporting documentation, in addition to this, management did not review internal controls effectiveness in detection, correction and prevention of these deficiencies and this resulted in repeat findings due to non-adherence to the audit action plan.

55. The audit committee did not ensure that the internal audit unit is adequately resourced which resulted in the unit not being able to enhance the internal controls of the municipality as they could not perform all planned audits per the audit plan.

Auditor General

Bloemfontein

30 November 2024



AUDITOR - GENERAL
SOUTH AFRICA

Auditing to build public confidence

Annexure to the auditor's report

1. The annexure includes the following:
 - The auditor-general's responsibility for the audit
 - The selected legislative requirements for compliance testing

Auditor-general's responsibility for the audit

Professional judgement and professional scepticism

2. As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout my audit of the financial statements and the procedures performed on reported performance information for selected material performance indicators and on the municipality's compliance with selected requirements in key legislation.

Financial statements

3. In addition to my responsibility for the audit of the financial statements as described in this auditor's report, I also:
 - identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control
 - obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the municipality's internal control
 - evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made
 - conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements. I also conclude, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists relating to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the municipality to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements about the material uncertainty or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion on the financial statements. My conclusions are based on the information available to me at the date of this auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause a municipality to cease operating as a going concern
 - evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and determine whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

Communication with those charged with governance

4. I communicate with the accounting officer regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.
5. I also provide the accounting officer with a statement that I have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence and communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on my independence and, where applicable, actions taken to eliminate threats or safeguards applied.

Compliance with legislation – selected legislative requirements

The selected legislative requirements are as follows:

Legislation	Sections or regulations
Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003	Sections: 1, 11(1), 13(2), 14(1), 14(2)(a), 14(2)(b), 15, 24(2)(c)(iv), 28(1), 29(1), Sections: 29(2)(b), 32(2), 32(2)(a), 32(2)(a)(i), 32(2)(a)(ii), 32(2)(b), 32(6)(a), Sections: 32(7), 53(1)(c)(ii), 54(1)(c), 62(1)(d), 63(2)(a), 63(2)(c), 64(2)(b), Sections :64(2)(c), 64(2)(e), 64(2)(f), 64(2)(g), 65(2)(a), 65(2)(b), 65(2)(e), Sections: 72(1)(a)(ii), 112(1)(j), 116(2)(b), 116(2)(c)(ii), 117, 122(1), 122(2), Sections: 126(1)(a) 126(1)(b), 127(2), 127(5)(a)(i), 127(5)(a)(ii), 129(1), 129(3), Sections: 133(1)(a), 133(1)(c)(i), 133(1)(c)(ii), 170, 171(4)(a), 171(4)(b)
MFMA: Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations, 2009	Regulations 71(1)(a), 71(1)(a)(b), 71(2)(a), 71(2)(b), 71(2)(d), 72(a), 72(b), 72(c)
MFMA: Municipal Investment Regulations, 2005	Regulations 3(1)(a), 3(3), 6, 7, 12(2), 12(3)
MFMA: Municipal Regulations on Financial Misconduct Procedures and Criminal Proceedings, 2014	Regulations 5(4), 6(8)(a), 6(8)(b), 10(1)
MFMA: Municipal Supply Chain Management Regulations, 2017	Regulations 5, 12(1)(c), 12(3), 13(b), 13(c), 16(a), 17(1)(a), 17(1)(b), 17(1)(c), Regulations: 19(a), 21(b), 22(1)(b)(i), 22(2), 27(2)(a), 27(2)(e), 28(1)(a)(i), Regulations: 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b), 29(5)(a)(ii), 29(5)(b)(ii), 32, 36(1), 36(1)(a), Regulations: 38(1)(c), 38(1)(d)(ii), 38(1)(e), 38(1)(g)(i) , 38(1)(g)(ii), 38(1)(g)(iii), Regulations: 43, 44, 46(2)(e), 46(2)(f)
MSA: Municipal Staff Regulations	Regulations 7(1), 31
Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (MSA)	Sections 25(1), 26(a), 26(c), 26(h), 26(i), 29(1)(b)(ii), 34(a), 34(b), 38(a), Sections: 41(1)(a), 41(1)(b), 41(1)(c)(ii), 42, 43(2), 54A(1)(a), 56(1)(a), 57(2)(a), Sections: 57(6)(a), 66(1)(a), 66(1)(b), 67(1)(d), 74(1), 96(b)
MSA: Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations, 2001	Regulations 2(1)(e), 2(3)(a), 3(3), 3(4)(b), 7(1), 8, 9(1)(a), 10(a), 12(1) Regulations 15(1)(a)(i), 15(1)(a)(ii)

Legislation	Sections or regulations
MSA: Municipal Performance Regulations for Municipal Managers and Managers Directly Accountable to Municipal Managers, 2006	Regulations 2(3)(a), 4(4)(b), 8(1), 8(2), 8(3)
MSA: Regulations on Appointment and Conditions of Employment of Senior Managers, 2014	Regulations 17(2), 36(1)(a)
MSA: Disciplinary Regulations for Senior Managers, 2011	Regulations 5(2), 5(3), 5(6), 8(4)
Division of Revenue Act 5 of 2023	Sections 11(6)(b), 12(5), 16(1); 16(3)
Construction Industry Development Board Act 38 of 2000	Section 18(1)
Construction Industry Development Board Regulations, 2004	Regulations 17, 25(7A)
Municipal Property Rates Act 6 of 2004	Section 3(1)
Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act 5 of 2000	Sections 2(1)(a), 2(1)(f)
Preferential Procurement Regulations, 2017	Regulations 4(1), 4(2), 5(1), 5(3), 5(6), 5(7), 6(1), 6(2), 6(3), 6(6), 6(8), 7(1) Regulations 7(2), 7(3), 7(6), 7(8), 8(2), 8(5), 9(1), 10(1), 10(2), 11(1), 11(2)
Preferential Procurement Regulations, 2022	Regulations 4(1), 4(2), 4(3), 4(4), 5(1), 5(2), 5(3), 5(4)
Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act 12 of 2004	Section 34(1)