

Report of the auditor-general to the Free State Legislature and the council on Fezile Dabi District Municipality

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Qualified opinion

1. I have audited the financial statements of the Fezile Dabi District Municipality set out on pages ... to ..., which comprise the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021, the 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, except for the effects and possible effects of the matters described in the basis for qualified opinion section of this auditor's report, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Fezile Dabi District Municipality as at 30 June 2021, 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 10 of 2020 (Dora).

Basis for qualified opinion

Property, plant and equipment

3. The municipality did not correctly account for information technology (IT) equipment included as part of property, plant and equipment in note 7 to the financial statements, in accordance with GRAP 17, *Property, Plant and Equipment*. The municipality incorrectly capitalised assets during the financial year that were purchased in the next financial period. Consequently, property, plant and equipment and trade payables were overstated by R3 136 676.

General expenses

4. I was unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence for general expenses, as supporting evidence was not provided for certain expenses. I was unable to confirm the general expenses by alternative means. Consequently, I was unable to determine whether any adjustments relating to general expenses stated at R38 621 957 in note 28 the financial statements, were necessary.

Contracted services

5. The municipality did not recognise contracted services in accordance with GRAP 1, *Presentation of financial statements*, as the municipality did not have an adequate system to ensure that legal services were accurately recognised in the period that the services were received. Consequently, contracted services was overstated by R2 847 042 (2020: R2 847 042 understated) and payables from exchange transactions was understated by RNil (2020: R2 847 042). In addition, there was an impact on the deficit for the period.

Net cash flows from operating activities

6. The municipality did not correctly prepare and disclose the net cash flows from operating activities in accordance with GRAP 2, *Cash flow statements*. This was due to multiple errors in determining cash flows from operating activities. I was not able to determine the full extent of the errors in the net cash flows from operating activities as it was impracticable to do so. Consequently, I was unable to determine whether any adjustments were necessary to cash flows from operating activities, stated at R2 431 411 in the financial statements.

Context for the opinion

7. I conducted my audit in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor-general's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report.
8. 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.
9. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my qualified opinion.

Emphasis of matters

10. I draw attention to the matters below. My opinion is not modified in respect of these matters.

Irregular expenditure

11. As disclosed in note 41 to the financial statements, the municipality incurred irregular expenditure of R27 734 003 (2020: R14 770 512), due to non-compliance with supply chain management (SCM) requirements. In addition, the full extent of irregular expenditure is still in the process of being determined.

Unauthorised expenditure

12. As disclosed in note 39 to the financial statements, the municipality incurred unauthorised expenditure of R46 579 839 (2020: R5 225 398), due to overspending of the budget.

Restatement of corresponding figures

13. As disclosed in note 38 to the financial statements, the corresponding figures for 30 June 2020 were restated as a result of an error in the financial statements of the municipality at, and for the year ended, 30 June 2021.

Other matters

14. I draw attention to the matter below. My opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Unaudited disclosure notes

15. In terms of section 125(2)(e) of the MFMA, the municipality is required to disclose particulars of non-compliance with the MFMA 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

16. 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.
17. 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.

Auditor-general's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

18. 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.
19. A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is included in the annexure to this auditor's report.

Report on the audit of the annual performance report

Introduction and scope

20. In accordance with the Public Audit Act 25 of 2004 (PAA) and the general notice issued in terms thereof, I have a responsibility to report on the usefulness and reliability of the reported performance information against predetermined objectives for the selected key performance area (KPA) presented in the annual performance report. I performed procedures to identify material findings but not to gather evidence to express assurance.
21. My procedures address the usefulness and reliability of the reported performance information, which must be based on the municipality's approved performance planning documents. I have not evaluated the completeness and appropriateness of the performance indicators included in the planning documents. My procedures do not examine whether the actions taken by the municipality enabled service delivery. My procedures do not extend to any disclosures or assertions relating to the extent of achievements in the current year or planned performance strategies and information in respect of future periods that may be included as part of the reported performance information. Accordingly, my findings do not extend to these matters.
22. I evaluated the usefulness and reliability of the reported performance information in accordance with the criteria developed from the performance management and reporting framework, as defined in the general notice, for the following selected KPA presented in the municipality's annual performance report for the year ended 30 June 2021:

KPA	Pages in the annual performance report
KPA 2 – basic service delivery and infrastructure investment	x – x

23. I performed procedures to determine whether the reported performance information was properly presented and whether performance was consistent with the approved performance planning documents. I performed further procedures to determine whether the indicators and related targets were measurable and relevant, and assessed the reliability of the reported performance information to determine whether it was valid, accurate and complete.
24. I did not identify any material findings on the usefulness and reliability of the reported performance information for this KPA - basic service delivery and infrastructure investment.

Report on the audit of compliance with legislation

Introduction and scope

25. In accordance with the PAA and the general notice issued in terms thereof, I have a responsibility to report material findings on the municipality's compliance with specific matters in key legislation. I performed procedures to identify findings but not to gather evidence to express assurance.

26. The material findings on compliance with specific matters in key legislation are as follows:

Annual financial statements

27. The financial statements submitted for auditing were not prepared in all material respects in accordance with the requirements of section 122(1) of the MFMA. Material misstatements of, current assets, liabilities, revenue, expenditure and disclosure items identified by the auditors in the submitted financial statements were subsequently corrected and the supporting records provided, but the uncorrected material misstatements and supporting records that could not be provided resulted in the financial statements receiving a qualified audit opinion.
28. The financial statements were not submitted to the auditor-general, for auditing, within two months after the end of the financial year, as required by section 126(1)(a) of the MFMA.

Procurement and contract management

29. Some of the goods and services with a transaction value of below R200 000 were procured without obtaining the required price quotations, in contravention of SCM regulation 17(1)(a) and (c). Similar non-compliance was also reported in the prior year.
30. Goods and services of a transaction value above R200 000 were procured without inviting competitive bids, as required by SCM regulation 19(a). Deviations were approved by the accounting officer even though it was not impractical to invite competitive bids, in contravention of SCM regulation 36(1). Similar non-compliance was also reported in the prior year.
31. Contracts were awarded to bidders based on points given for criteria 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 2017 preferential procurement regulation (PPR). Similar non-compliance was also reported in the prior year.

Expenditure management

32. An adequate management, accounting and information system was not in place which recognised expenditure when it was incurred and/or accounted for creditors, as required by section 65(2)(b) of the MFMA.
33. Reasonable steps were not taken to prevent irregular expenditure, as required by section 62(1)(d) of the MFMA. The value of R27 734 003, as disclosed in note 41 to the financial statements, is not complete as management was still in the process of quantifying the full extent of the irregular expenditure. Most of the disclosed irregular expenditure was caused by non-compliance with SCM requirements.
34. Reasonable steps were not taken to prevent unauthorised expenditure amounting to R46 579 839, as disclosed in note 39 to the financial statements, in contravention of section 62(1)(d) of the MFMA. Most of the unauthorised expenditure was caused by overspending of the approved budget.

Consequence management

35. 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.
36. Irregular expenditure incurred by the municipality was not investigated to determine if any person is liable for the expenditure, as required by section 32(2)(b) of the MFMA.
37. Fruitless and wasteful expenditure incurred by the municipality was not investigated to determine if any person is liable for the expenditure, as required by section 32(2)(b) of the MFMA.

Other information

38. The accounting officer is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, which includes the audit committee's report. The other information does not include the financial statements, the auditor's report and those selected KPA presented in the annual performance report that have been specifically reported in this auditor's report.
39. My opinion on the financial statements and findings on the reported performance information and compliance with legislation do not cover the other information and I do not express an audit opinion or any form of assurance conclusion on it.
40. In connection with my audit, my responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements and the selected key performance areas presented in the annual performance report, or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.
41. I did not receive the other information prior to 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

42. I considered internal control relevant to my audit of the financial statements, reported performance information and compliance with applicable legislation; however, my objective was not to express any form of assurance on it. The matters reported below are limited to the significant internal control deficiencies that resulted in the basis for the qualified opinion and the findings on compliance with legislation included in this report.
43. There was a slow response from leadership and management to implement and monitor the audit action plan to address the findings and internal control deficiencies identified during the previous audits, resulting in material misstatements and repeat non-compliance with the relevant legislation.

44. Management did not implement and monitor daily and monthly processing controls, prepare regular, accurate and complete financial reports that were supported by reliable information, as material corrections were made to the financial statements.
45. Inadequate oversight and accountability resulted in officials not being held accountable for transgressions of laws and regulations, and council did not ensure that all unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure incurred was investigated during the year under review.

AUDITOR-GENERAL

Bloemfontein

28 February 2022



AUDITOR-GENERAL
SOUTH AFRICA

Auditing to build public confidence

Annexure – Auditor-general's responsibility for the audit

1. 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 key performance areas and on the municipality's compliance with respect to the selected subject matters.

Financial statements

2. 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 by the accounting officer
 - conclude on the appropriateness of the accounting officer's 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 Fezile Dabi District 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

3. 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.

I also provide the accounting officer with a statement that I have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to 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.