Report of the auditor-general to the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature on the Ndlambe Local Municipality

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

1. I have audited the financial statements of the Ndlambe Local Municipality set out on pages xx to xx, which comprise the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, 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 Ndlambe Local Municipality as at 30 June 2023 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the South African Standards of Generally Recognised Accounting Practice (SA Standards of GRAP) and the requirements of the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA) and the Division of Revenue Act 5 of 2022 (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 in respect of these matters.

Restatement of corresponding figures

7. As disclosed in note 43 to the financial statements, the corresponding figures for 30 June 2022 were restated as a result of an error in the financial statements of the municipality at, and for the year ended 30 June 2023

Material losses and impairments

8. As disclosed in note 48 to the financial statements, material water losses of R22,3 million (2022: R14,1million) were incurred, which represents 45,3% (2022: 38,2%) of total water purchased. The losses were predominantly due to physical losses from leaks, burst pipes and reservoir overflows. Furthermore, apparent losses were realised due to metering inefficiencies, meter faults, and unauthorised and unmetered consumption

9. As disclosed in notes 4 and 5 to the financial statements, impairments of R50,4 million (2022: R48,9 million) relating to receivables from non-exchange and R127,6 million (2022: R118,1 million) relating to receivables from exchange transactions were incurred as a result of irrecoverable debtors.

Unauthorised expenditure

10. As disclosed in note 44 to the financial statements, unauthorised expenditure of R124,3 million was incurred in the current year and previous years due to overspending of cash and non-cash items in various municipal departments. This balance is an accumulation of current and previous year amounts. In the current year, R75,5 million was written off, while in the previous year, R71 million had been written off.

Irregular expenditure

11. As disclosed in note 46 to the financial statements, irregular expenditure of R235,2 million (2022: R301,8 million) was incurred in the current year and previous years due to supply chain management (SCM) regulations and policy deviations. This balance is an accumulation of current and previous year amounts. In the current year, R148,5 million was written off, while in the previous year, R410,3 million had been written off.

Unspent conditional grants

12. As disclosed in note 17 to the financial statements, the municipality has unspent conditional grants and receipts of R14,6 million (2022: R16,7 million).

Other matter

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

Unaudited disclosure note

14. 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. The disclosure requirements 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

15. The accounting officer is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the SA Standards of GRAP and the requirements of the MFMA

and the 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.

16. 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

17. 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.

18. 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

19. 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 against predetermined objectives for the selected development priorities presented in the annual performance report. The accounting officer is responsible for the preparation of the annual performance report.

20. I selected the following development priority presented in the annual performance report for the year ended 30 June 2023 for auditing. I selected a development priority that measures the municipality's performance on its primary mandated functions and that is of significant national, community or public interest.

Development priority	Page numbers	Purpose
Basic service delivery	XX	The development priority is key to the core functions of the municipality and service delivery within the municipality

21. I evaluated the reported performance information for the selected development priority 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.

22. 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
- 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, time bound 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 reasons provided for any over- or underachievement of targets and the measures taken to improve performance.

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

24. I did not identify any material findings on the reported performance information for the development priority, basic service delivery.

Other matters

25. I draw attention to the matters below.

Achievement of planned targets

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

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. 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:

Annual report

32. The local community was not invited to submit representations in connection with the 2021-22 annual report, as required by section 127(5)(a)(ii) of the MFMA.

33. The oversight report adopted by the council on the 2021-22 annual report was not made public, as required by section 129(3) of the MFMA.

Expenditure management

34. Reasonable steps were not taken to prevent irregular expenditure amounting to R81,8 million as disclosed in note 46 to the annual financial statements, as required by section 62(1)(d)of the MFMA. The majority of the irregular expenditure was caused by not adequately applying section 36 of the SCM regulations.

35. Reasonable steps were not taken to prevent fruitless and wasteful expenditure amounting to R654 679, as disclosed in note 45 to the annual financial statements, in contravention of section 62(1)(d) of the MFMA. The majority of the disclosed fruitless and wasteful expenditure was caused by the misappropriation of traffic department deposits.

36. Reasonable steps were not taken to prevent unauthorised expenditure amounting to R84 million, as disclosed in note 44 to the annual financial statements, in contravention of section 62(1)(d) of the MFMA. The majority of the unauthorised expenditure was caused by overspending of the budget per municipal department on cash and non-cash items.

Consequence management

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.

Human resource management

38. Appropriate systems and procedures to monitor, measure and evaluate performance of staff were not developed and adopted, as required by section 67(1)(d) of the MSA.

39. Bonuses were paid to the municipal manager and senior managers before the annual report for the applicable performance year was tabled and adopted by the council, as required by municipal performance regulations for municipal managers and managers directly accountable to municipal managers 8(1).

Other information in the annual report

40. The accounting officer is responsible for the other information included in the annual report, which includes the audit committee's report. The other information referred to does not include the financial statements, the auditor's report and the selected development priority presented in the annual performance report that have been specifically reported on in this auditor's report.

41. 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.

42. 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 development priorities presented in the annual performance report or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

43. 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.

44. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report on that fact.

Internal control deficiencies

45. 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.

46. A formal code of conduct is in place at the municipality that addresses appropriate ethical and moral behaviour. The implementation of the code, however, was not effective in ensuring that instances of irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure did not occur. Furthermore, leadership was unable to effectively detect and correct material misstatements in the annual performance report, and adjustments were made to address material findings in performance reporting. In addition, leadership did not put measures in place to ensure that appropriate consequences were taken against instances of non-compliance.

47. Management developed an audit action plan; however, it was not adequately implemented and monitored to ensure findings raised in the prior year did not re-occur. Specifically, the municipality has not developed a compliance monitoring tool to monitor compliance with all the relevant laws and regulations applicable to the municipality to ensure compliance by all municipal officials. As a result, material non-compliance with the laws and regulations has been identified.

48. The municipality did not ensure that there is an adequately resourced internal audit function to identify internal control deficiencies. This is evidenced by the material findings in performance information that was subsequently corrected by management. Furthermore, repeat material findings have been identified in compliance with laws and regulations.

Other reports

49. I draw attention to the following engagements conducted by various parties. These reports did not form part of my opinion on the financial statements or my findings on the reported performance information or compliance with legislation.

50. The municipality conducted a forensic investigation in connection with the suspected fraud in the traffic department in the 2022-23 year. The municipal manager took steps regarding the matter and immediately suspended the affected officials.

51. The forensic investigation was conducted and was tabled to the council on the 28 November 2023, which will allow the municipality to proceed with the final steps to be taken.

Auditor - General.

Auditor General

East London

30 November 2023

AUDITOR-GENERAL
SOUTH AFRICA

Auditing to build public confidence

Annexure to the auditor's report

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

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 the selected development priority and on the municipality's compliance with selected requirements in key legislation.

Financial statements

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

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 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 (Act No. 56 of 2003)	Section 122 (1) Section 122 (2) Section 126 (1) (a) and 126 (1)(b) Section 133 (1)(a) and 133 (1)(c) Section 127 (2) and 127 (5)(a) Section 129 (1) and 129 (3) Section 65 (2) (e) and 65 (2) (a) Section 11 (1) Section 62 (1)(d) Section 87 (8) Section 15 Section 29 (1) and 29 (2) (b) Section 62(1)(f)(i) and 62(1)(f)(ii) Section 63(2)(a) Section 64(2)(e) and 64 (2) (b) Section 64(2) (c) and 64(2)(g) Section 13(2) Section 14(1) Section 14(2)(a) and 14(2)(b) Section 33(2) Section 170 Section 32(2) and 32(6)(a) Section 171 (4)(a) Section 53(1)(c)(ii) Section 1 Section 72(1)(a)(ii) Section 24(2)(c)(iv) Section 54(1)(c) Section 117
Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations	Regulation 71 (1) and 71 (2) Regulation 72
Municipal Structures Act ,(Act No.32 of 2000)	Section 74(1) Section 96 (b) Section 29(1)(b)(ii) Section 42

Legislation	Sections or regulations
	Section 25(1) Section 26 Section 41(1)(a) and 41(1)(b) Section 43(2) Section 4(a) and 41(1)(c)(ii) Section 34(b) Section 38(a)
Municipal Property Rates Act ,(Act No.06 of 2004)	Section 3 (1)
Municipal investment regulations	Regulation 3(1)(a) and 3(3) Regulation 6 Regulation 7 Regulation 12(2) and 12(3)
Prevention and Combatting of Corrupt Activities Act (Act No.12 of 2004)	Section 34(1)
Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations	Regulation 15(1)(a)(i) Regulation 2(1)(e) Regulation 2(3)(a) Regulation 9(1)(a Regulation 10(a) Regulation 12(1) Regulation 3(4)(b) and 15(1)(a)(ii) Regulation 3(3) Regulation 8 Regulation 7(1)
Disciplinary Regulations for Senior Managers	Regulation 5 (2) Regulation 5 (6) Regulation 8 (4)
Financial Misconduct Regulations	Regulation 5(4) Regulation 6(8)(a) Regulation 10(1)
Supply Chain Management Regulations	Regulation 121(1)(c) Regulation 16(a) Regulation 17(a) and (c) Regulation 17(b) Regulation 43

Legislation	Sections or regulations
	Regulation 19(a) &(b) Regulation 3691)(a) Regulation 12(3) Regulation 27(2)(a)&(e) Regulation 22(1)(b) & 22(2) Regulation 28(1)(a)(i) Regulation 21(b) Regulation 29(1) (a) & (b) Regulation 29(5)(a)(ii) & (b)(i) Regulation 13(c) Regulation 38(1) (c.) Regulation 38(1)(d)(ii) & (g)(iii) Regulation 38(1) (e.) Regulation 38(1)(g)(i) and 38(1)(g)(ii) Regulation 32 Regulation 5 Regulation 44 Regulation 46(2)(e) and 46(2)(f)
Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act,(Act No.5 of 200)	Section sec 2(1)(a) Section 2(1)(f)
Public Procurement Regulations of 2017	Regulation 6(1) and 7(1) Regulation 6(8), 7(8), 10(1)&(2) & 11(1) Regulation 5(1) & 5(3) Regulation 5(6) Regulation 5(7) Regulation 9(1)
Public Procurement Regulations of 2022	Regulation 4(1) and 5(1) Regulation 4(4) & 5(4)
Construction Industry Development Board Act (Act No.38 of 2000)	Section 18(1)
Construction Industry Development Board Regulations	Regulation 17 Regulation 25(7A)
Municipal Cost Containment Regulations,2019	Reg 5(1) MFMA 62(1)(a) / MFMA 78(1)(b) MFMA 95(a) / MFMA 105(1)(b) Reg 5(5)(f)