

Evolution of Contemporary Local Government in Botswana

“Experts from the Bechuanaland Protectorate Legislative Council Paper No.21 of 1964”

Local Government in the Bechuanaland Protectorate has a long and honorable history, its purpose and significance have changed in various ways from time to time and the use of the term “LG” itself is relatively new in Bechuanaland, but from the earliest days, of the Protectorate it has been possible to distinguish between national and local administration and to identify the latter closer with specifically local interest and needs. To a great extent the local unit has been the tribe and almost in-variably the local authority has been the Chief. The history of LG till now has been almost entirely associated with the Chieftainship.

In 1963, the Resident Commissioner, through the LG Committee carried out a series of consultations with leaders of political parties and important groups with a view to making recommendations to the secretary of state regarding a new Constitution for Bechuanaland. These recommendations have since been accepted by the secretary of state and will be embodied in the territorial Constitution to be introduced in March 1965. During the same period, Her Majesty’s Commissioner initiated an enquiry into local government by consulting the African Council in July 1963. Following a constructive discussion in the African Council which warmly supported the need for a thorough examination of the whole subject, Her Majesty’s Commissioner appointed a committee of local government in areas outside the townships with particular reference to;

- a) The relationship of local government to Tribal Administration, and
- b) The structure, functions. Finance and staffing of local government.

The committee consisted of the Chief Secretary (ex-office) (chairman), three members chosen by the chiefs, three members elected by the African Council from amongst its members, three members appointed by Her Majesty’s Commissioner, and three officials.

The Committee's report was submitted in April 1964 and government then arranged for the report to be discussed by the existing local councils, and in June, by the African Council. The views of these bodies were generally favorable to the recommendations in the report, subjected to some concern in certain quarters regarding the position of the Chiefs to the need for further local consultations regarding the exact composition of district council and other points of detail.

The way is now clear for the government to express its general conclusions on the report and for these to be related in the Legislative Council. In the light of council's view, firm government policy will be formulated and will be explained in detail to the people at kgotlas and other public meetings at dates to be determined by the government of Bechuanaland after the new constitution comes into force. It may prove convenient to hold these meetings about the middle of 1965. During 1965, too, it is expected that a Local government Bill will be drafted in consultation with the committee, and ministers might wish to hold Local government elections about September 1965 with a view to setting up the new District Councils on the 1st January 1966.

“Experts from a speech by His Excellency the First president of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama addressing the national assembly on Thursday 6th October 1966

Last Friday I took the Oath of Office as president of the Republic of Botswana. In that Oath I undertook to maintain the constitution of Botswana to uphold its laws and to direct my abilities to the service and welfare of the Peoples of Botswana without fear or favor, affection or ill-will.

My Government is dedicated to the democratic tradition and will not tolerate autocracy of any kind in Botswana. When I refer to the democratic tradition I am thinking not only of Central Government institutions, but also of Local Government bodies. We now have in Botswana a system of elected local councils with executive powers and these embody a non-racial, representative and responsible form of Local Government which reflects the nature of Central Government. My Government will not tolerate any improper activity which is

directed towards frustrating the efficient and legitimate functioning of these Local Government bodies. These bodies are the democratic mouthpiece of the people of Botswana who have a right to a say in the management of their lives. Autocracy and traditionalism must give way to the authority of these bodies when they are operating in their legitimate spheres.

When these Local Government bodies were established the traditional tribal leaders were encouraged to play a vital role on them and in the majority of cases the Local Chief became the Chairman as well as the Chief Executive of the Local Council. The Chiefs have therefore been offered the opportunity to preserve their dignity and prestige and to serve the people of Botswana. I acknowledge that the position of the Chief in a modern African State is not always as easy one, but a Chief's chance of maintaining a useful identity and future depends to a large extent on himself and on his willingness and capacity to make the most of what is offered to him. A Chief who becomes the efficient chairman of the Local Council and its voted and Loyal Chief Executive will play a much more vigorous and useful role in Local Administration than he ever did in the past. But a Chief who declines to cooperate with a Local Government body when it is operating in the fields which have been assigned to it by the democratically elected legislature will soon become a person shorn of any effective influence or power and of no real importance in the land.

This change in the role of the traditional Chiefs in Botswana of course reflects the progress of the country from a collection of tribes with local loyalties and aims to a nation state with a common national pride and common national interest. My Government will foster and promote this national spirit at every opportunity and looks forward to the day when the people of this country will think of themselves first as Botswana rather than as members of a particular tribal group. Local loyalties will of course continue to exist but they must give way to a loyalty to the nation state of Botswana.

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

1962-1963: -Institution of Local Government Committee to look into the terms and conditions of Tribal Administration staff.

1963: -Constitutional discussion with political parties and Dikgosi were undertaken.

1964:- Legislative Paper No. 21 on Local Government issued.

1965: - Constitution introduced in March

- Local Government bill drafted and Local Government elections held in September.
- Local Government (District Councils) instrument No.35 of 1965 led to creation of 9 districts councils being units of the Government.
- Local Government bill also embraced town councils being units of Local Governments.

1968: -Enactment of the law establishing Tribal Land Board.

- Establishment of Village Development Committees through a Residential Directive.

1969: - Appointment of Local Government study group by His Excellency the President on the 27th December 1969 to examine the relationship between district level agencies.

1970: - Establishment of District Development Committees through Presidential Directive No. 62 of 1970.

- Tribal Land Boards officially established.

1973: - Unified Local Government Service Act enacted.

1979: -First Presidential Local Government structure Commission appointed to look into the structure of Local Government.

1991: - Organization and Method review of the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing.

1995:- Establishment of Urban Development Committees through Ministerial Directive.

1999:- MLG created out of split of Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing.

2001:- Second Presidential commission on Local Government structure appointed to look into the structure of Local Government.

2004:- Increasing council wards from 406 to 490; and nominated members from 71 to 101.

- White Paper No.1 of 2004 on Local Government structure issued.

2005:- Ministry of Local Government internally re-restructured.

2006:- Election of members of Ntlo ya Dikgosi from the 20 regions.

2007:- New- organizational structure for Local Authorities approved by Cabinet.

2008:- Bogosi Act passed by Parliament (Re- enactment of Chieftainship Act).

2009:- Amendment of the Local Government (District Council) Act and Townships Act to extend tenure of council leadership from one year to two and half years.

- Merging of Local Police with Botswana Police (Repealing of Local Police Act).
- Merging of Public Service Acts (Unified Local Government Service Act repealed).

SUCCESSION OF HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND PERMANENT SECRETARIES

DATE	HONOURABLE MINISTERS
1965	T. Tsheko
1966	E.M.K Kgabo
1973	K.P. Morake
1974	L.H. Makgekgenene
1979	L.M. Seretse
1983	E.M.K. Kgabo
1984	L. Mothibamele
1986	P.K. Balopi
1990	P.S. Mmusi
1993	C.J. Butale
1994	P.K. Balopi
1998	D.K. Kwelagobe
1999	M.N. Nasha
2002- 2004	M.R. Tshipinare
2004-2009	M.N. Nasha
2009-	A.B. Masalila

DATE**HONOURABLE ASS. MINISTERS**

1974	L.M. Seretse
1977	W.M. Seboni
1979	D. Kwele
1984	M.R. Tshipinare
1984	O.I. Chilume
1988	K.R. Sebegu
1992	G.M. Oteng
1992	B.M. Mokgothu
1994	M.N. Nasha
1997	J. Phumaphi
1999-2004	G.T.R Kokorwe
2004-2009	A.B. Masalila
2008	O. Mfa
2009-	L. Mokalake
2009-	O. S. Molebatsi

DATE**PERMANENT SECRETARIES**

1965-1969

P.J. Heady

1969-1973

R. Mannathoko

1973-1978

B.G. Makobole

1978-1980

B.K.Temane

1980-1982

M.S. Mpuchane

1982-1987

P.O. Molosi

1987-1989

B.K. Sebele

1989-1992

P. Venson

1989-1989

M.L. Mokone

1992-1996

O.O. Pitso

1996-2000

E.G.M. Mhlauli

2000-2003

E. M. Molale

2003-2007

S.O. Rathedi

2007-2008

G.G. Gabaake

2008-

T.Y. Raphaka

