



Analysis into the Impact of Acting Heads of Departments in running the City of Harare

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Introduction: The Harare Residents Trust (HRT) is increasingly becoming concerned with the state of affairs in the City of Harare. Nearly all the six departments in Council, except for the Department of Health and of Human Capital, are being led by people in acting capacities. The Human Capital Department is led by substantive director Mr Kainos Chimombe while the City Health Department is led by Dr Prosper Chonzi. In terms of performance, evidently, the City Health Department has outperformed all the other departments in terms of accountability, transparency and interaction with the citizenry. In this analysis into the impact of having acting heads of departments, the HRT critically examines the departments' contribution towards the provision of essential services to the citizens, the role of the Human Resources Committee and will argue that the absence of substantive heads of departments negatively impacts on the delivery of quality services to the people. As part of the analysis, we shall examine what kind of decisions an acting head of department can make, and for how long that person could be in the acting capacity before a substantive official is appointed. The Harare City Council (HCC) has the Town Clerk, Chamber Secretary, Directors of Health, Works, Water, Housing and Community Services and Finance.

Heads of Department: The authors have noted that currently the office of the Town Clerk is vacant, and is occupied by Mrs Josephine Ncube (Acting Town Clerk), Charles Kandemiri (Acting Chamber Secretary), Engineer Calvin Chigariro (Acting Director of Works), Engineer Simon Muserera (Acting Director of Water), Retired Major Matthew Marara (Acting Housing and Community Services), Tendai Kwenda (Acting Finance Director or City Treasurer) and Michael Chideme (Acting Communications Manager or Spokesman). Dr Chonzi and Mr Chimombe are the only ones of the heads of departments who are substantive. This means that in terms of authority and power, the two can execute decisions without having to seek approval from another head of department.

Local Government expert Mr Shingirayi Mushamba told the HRT in an interview that a person who is in an acting capacity is vulnerable and cannot make important decisions. Indeed, being in an acting capacity for long does not bode well for efficient and effective performance by staff and if in leadership, by their units as well, Mushamba argued.

“When in an Acting capacity, it means you are doing your own work and the helping out in the position on which you are acting,” Mushamba said. “So already it means one is burdened.”

Where an official is holding a position in an acting capacity, the official has very little room to challenge decisions made by other heads. There are high possibilities that during the acting period, this person lacks independence, and is open to manipulation by people in the Human Resources Committee.

Another local government expert, and former Harare City Council employee, Mr Percy Toriro agrees that the absence of substantive heads of departments severely limits the performance of the council in discharging its public mandate.

Toriro said: Acting officials in leadership positions negatively affect service delivery. People are not confident to make important decisions if they are not sure of their tenure. Organisations are therefore encouraged to quickly fill in key positions if they expect the best out of employees. It certainly is not sustainable for Harare to be run by acting professionals in strategic positions.”

His sentiments reflect the tragedy in most local authorities where some positions have been held by acting professionals for more than two years without being filled up, which ultimately affects decision making and delivery of services by local authorities.

Sections Covered By Each Head: Each department of council has a council committee that oversees its operations, and the respective heads of departments sit in these council committees to provide technical support and produce reports, guided by the councillors. The City Health department, under Dr Chonzi is overseen by the Education, Health, Housing, Community Services and Licensing Committee, chaired and deputized by Councillors Resias Masunda (Ward 44, Kuwadzana Extension and Thomas Chineka (Ward 29, Glen Norah A) respectively. The services which are being offered under this department are clinic/hospitals, Environmental health, Pharmacy, Administration, Dental services, Health promotion and Nutrition. (Harare, 2016)

The **Town Clerk’s** department, currently headed by Mrs Josephine Ncube, has six sections. These are; Corporate Affairs and Communications, Information and communication technology (ICT), Supply Chain, Internal Audit, Business development Unit, Monitoring and Evaluation. This is one of the most important offices of the HCC, and it has been the major source of the ongoing conflict which threatens the provision of essential services by the council. The confusion in the city has resulted in the council failing to pay employees on time, with outstanding salaries reaching six months to date. Being the Chief Executive, the Town Clerk’s Office directs council operations and provides leadership to all the other departments, liaising with the Mayor’s Office. This is the Chief

executive of the City and all the businesses that are responsible to generate revenue for the city must be managed from this department. This department is responsible for the Auditing of the City and it is a huge challenge to have transparency and accountability within the city as long as this department has no substantive officer to head the team. It is extremely difficult to fully hold an acting head of department for failures, poor monitoring and evaluation of council policies, plans and implementation of strategies because the Acting head of Department has no full responsibility of running the organisation. Hence the Town Clerk's Department is not functioning to its full capacity, given this level of uncertainty.

According to Mayor of Harare Councillor Bernard Manyenyeni, the Town Clerk's Office is accountable to the Mayor of Harare. In his view the absence of substantive heads of departments has severely crippled the council's operations.

"As you can fully appreciate, the political interference has planted a costly monster around our functioning as a Council," the Mayor told the HRT. We have moved back one year. Our energies and focus are now in the media and in the courts. We are severely hamstrung. Everyone is dodging bullets nothing to do with service delivery. What we have seen in the past few months is a threat to service delivery, but by no means a total crisis."

"The Town Clerk's Office covers the whole council and the TC reports to the Mayor."

Overall, the impact of having non- substantive heads of departments is quite significant. According to the Mayor, who is the policy head of the City of Harare, uncertainty is unhealthy, tough but necessary decisions are deferred by temporary holders (out of caution, better safe than sorry), jostling by job aspirants who resort to all types of tactics to land the positions including canvassing and lobbying. He also said priority becomes NOT what needs to be done but what has to be done to get the job or to get a particular aspirant into the job.

The **Department of Works** which was previously led by outgoing Director Engineer Philip Pfukwa, has been the worst performer in the HCC. Engineer Chigariro has now been appointed as the Acting Director, with the mammoth task of steering the department until a substantive officer has been appointed. Within the Works Department are divisions like the; Environment and Amenities, Engineering Services, Land Management and Development and Built Environment Management. This department, like the health department, is also supervised by the Health, Housing, Community Services and Licensing Committee. There has been poor waste management where residents are going for months with uncollected refuse, roads are heavily potholed and little efforts are being made to rectify the situation. Most street lights and tower lights are reportedly down for almost a

year and residents have experienced nightmares walking at night, becoming targets for robbers. The non-clearance of drainages across Harare resulting in floods being experienced during the rainy season. Across the suburbs are high levels of poor planning with illegal structures all over the place, which led to housing demolitions earlier this year yet the department has a monitoring division to ensure that citizens build according to council by-laws and town planning regulations. Ironically, no one has been disciplined for this negligent behaviour by the department of works. All this happened when they had a substantive director, and there are genuine fears that the situation might worsen now that there is an acting director of works.

Water and Wastewater: Under the management of Engineer Christopher Magwenzi Zvobgo for a very long time, the department is now being led by Acting Director, Engineer Samuel Muserera. The Health, Education, Housing, Community Services and Licensing Committee also play an oversight role on this department. The major challenge afflicting this department has been the issue of corruption where thousands of dollars have been lost through leakages in fuel purchases. Eastern suburbs have struggled to have water, yet the City of Harare has received US\$144 million in Chinese loan. Places like Kuwadzana and Mufakose experience regular water and sewerage bursts. Currently, there are several open trenches which were left open by Harare Water employees, due to poor or lack of monitoring and supervision. People have been getting injured in these trenches and it seems no one is concerned by these sad developments. Where a substantive director was failing to play his supervisory role, would an acting director turn around the situation? From the continued reports of poor water supplies, it could be argued therefore that the lack of prioritization by the outgoing Harare Water Director led to the council focusing on non-essential areas of the water pumping and distribution process. Evidently, there will always be problems of water delivery along the water distribution network, even when the Morton Jaffray Water Works are upgraded, requiring more investment in the water distribution network before residents enjoy adequate potable water supplies. The Water and Wastewater Department should have a proper planning, implementation and monitoring strategy for their services.

Finance Department/City Treasury: This department has been the most volatile in recent months. In the last three years, the department has been led by Misheck Mubvumbi, Cosmas Zvikaramba, and lately Justin Mandizha and now acting in the position is Tendai Kwenda as Acting Finance Director. From this scenario, it would seem that the City of Harare has been unable to find a suitable replacement to Mr Mubvumbi. After him Mr Mandizha was appointed, with the Local Government Board's approval. However, as soon as he had been appointed, reports were made that he was an uncle to the Mayor, which could possibly have influenced his recruitment to the council. His

departure was also fueled by reported acts of sabotage by people like Tendai Kwenda, who have always acted in the absence of a substantive Finance Director, and who now believe that the position belongs to them even if their qualifications fall short of the requirements. The chaos within the city revenue collection is due to failure by the Finance and Development Committee working together with the City Treasury Department, to develop concrete strategies that will increase revenue inflows even under the debilitating social economic crisis in Zimbabwe. There is apparent disconnection between the Council and the citizens, resulting in poor strategies being adopted in order to increase revenue collection. The absence of a substantive Finance Director makes it extremely difficult for the person acting to make substantial proposals, fearing that the proposals might be turned down by the councillors, risking the chances of landing the position on a substantive basis. So the result is that Kwenda cannot make substantial proposals or decisions except to maintain what has been there, treading carefully, even going to the extent of lobbying some councillors in the Human Resources Committee or the Finance and Development to be chosen to take over as substantive Finance Director. There is need to reduce the bills so that residents are able to pay rather than having huge budgets that the residents will never meet. The increase in the manipulation of figures and high level of corruption is affecting the level at which the city operates. (Chiri, 2014). For example the use of multiple accounts and poor management of funds that are generated from the city's strategic business units like the quarry, City Parking to name but a few. The Finance Department has poor control of employees, and has one of the worst records of transparency and accountability in the City of Harare.

Housing Department: This department has some of the most corrupt officials the City of Harare has ever employed, and yet they are not reprimanded. They are instead promoted and given senior positions to continue with their looting business. Initially, the Housing and Community Services Department was a stand-alone department, before it was forced to be under the Chamber Secretary's Office, in a clear blunder of rationalization, then under Dr Tendai Mahachi, then Town Clerk, as pressure mounted to cut down on the number of heads of departments. However, this was reversed later under the Acting Town Clerk, and the Housing and Community Services Department is now under Matthew Marara, in an Acting Capacity, sadly. Given the volatility associated with this department, it is unfortunate that there is no leadership to guide the City of Harare to address housing and community services challenges. The housing waiting list continues to grow. Prospective house owners have to fork out US\$6 every year to be on the waiting list. The department is reportedly at the forefront of allocating residential stands to people who already have other stands, and the housing waiting list is no longer being used. The issue of housing cooperatives and the council's housing policy have to be dealt with in a more transparent and accountable manner, and

this can only be moved with a substantive director, and not an Acting Director who has to be careful which toes he steps on.

HRT Analysis: The battles for power, control and authority at Town House have gone beyond mere service delivery battles, but a battle between the ruling party Zanu PF and the MDCT. This has created this ongoing confusion, as the MDCT controls Harare City Council on the policymaking side with 36 councillors, and Zanu PF has eight councillors, with one independent, and one vacant seat following the death of Councillor Farai Muzhinyi of Glen View (Ward 30). The continued delay in the appointment of the Town Clerk brings with it more confusion to the situation as the two political parties focus on gaining an upper hand on the other and they have both totally neglected service delivery issues. These political clashes should not be allowed to derail the work of the City of Harare. Local Authorities should be left to execute their mandates in terms of the law, and without external interference from political parties. While Zanu PF has not come out in the open on its position with regards to the ongoing crisis at Town House, the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing is perceived by the majority of residents to be using his party position as the Political Commissar of Zanu PF to address the issues affecting local government in Zimbabwe. There is need for the people who work in the Local Government sector to set their political differences aside for the sake of positive social and economic development. The policies which must be used are supposed to be put in practice. This current status which is the Harare City of having Acting Heads of department is causing a lot of corruption, lack of accountability and transparency within the City. This reflects a sign of poor governance in the Local Government Sector.

Conclusion: This analysis has successfully highlighted the negative impact of having non-substantive heads of departments in the Harare City Council. We have seen that the Departments of Health and the Human Capital have substantive directors, while there are acting heads of departments in the departments of Works, Water, Housing and Community Services, Finance, Town Clerk and Chamber Secretary. With all these gaps, the Human Resources Committee of council is not intervening to submit recommendations to the Full Council for the advertisements to be placed announcing the vacancies. It can therefore be concluded that it is most important for the Harare City Council to quickly fill in vacant positions to instill confidence in the whole professional team.

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