

MKHAMBATHINI MUNICIPALITY

DRAFT: ROAD TRAFFIC BY-LAW

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| 1ST DRAFT DATE | **24 March 2025** |
| 2ND DRAFT DATE |  |
| ADOPTION BY COUNCIL |  |
| PROMULGATION DATE |  |

**Preamble**

WHEREAS section 156(2) of the [Constitution](https://lawlibrary.org.za/akn/za/act/1996/constitution) provides that the Municipality may make and administer by-laws for the effective administration of the matters it has the right to administer;

WHEREAS municipal public transport is listed as a local government matter in Part B of Schedule 4, to the extent set out in section 155(6)(a) and (7) of the [Constitution](https://lawlibrary.org.za/akn/za/act/1996/constitution);

WHEREAS municipal roads, traffic and parking are listed as local government matters in Part B of Schedule 5, to the extent set out in section 155(6)(a) and (7) of the [Constitution](https://lawlibrary.org.za/akn/za/act/1996/constitution);

WHEREAS the Municipality intends to control nuisances emanating from the operation of public transportation within the jurisdiction of the Municipality;

WHEREAS by virtue of the Declaration of Peace Officers in terms of section 334 of the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977 ([Act No. 51 of 1977](https://lawlibrary.org.za/akn/za/act/1977/51)), law enforcement officers appointed by a municipality are provided with certain powers in relation to road traffic and road transportation legislation that is operative in the area of a municipality;

WHEREAS by virtue of section 80A of the National Road Traffic Act, the Municipality may make by-laws not inconsistent with that Act.

#### **Definitions**

1. In these Road Traffic Bylaws, any word or expression shall have the meaning assigned thereto in the relevant legislation, unless the context otherwise indicates:

“ **Abnormal vehicle”** means a vehicle or a combination of vehicles which do not comply with the relevant provisions of the National Road Traffic Act, 1996 ([Act No. 93 of 1996](https://openbylaws.org.za/akn/za/act/1996/93)) and which is otherwise not fit to be used on a public road.

**“Ambulance** “means a motor vehicle specifically constructed or adapted for the convenience of sick or injured persons to or from a place for medical treatment and which is registered as an ambulance;

**“Authorised Officer”** means:

1. a traffic officer or warden appointed in terms of the

National Road Traffic Act,1996(Act No 93 of 1996);

1. a member of the services as defined in section 1 of the South African Police Services Act, 1995(Act No 58 of 1995) ;
2. a peace officer contemplated in section 34 of the Criminal Procedure Act,1977(Act No 51 of 1977)
3. any other official duly authorised by the council,

**“Bus”** means a motor vehicle designed or adapted for the conveyance of more than 16 persons (including the driver, if any).

**“Combination of motor vehicles”** means two or more motor vehicles coupled together.

**“Chief Traffic Officer”** means the person appointed by the municipality to this position and includes a person acting in this position.

**“Driver”** meansany person who drives or attempt to drive any vehicle or who rides or attempts to attempts to ride any pedal cycle or who leads any draught, pack or saddle animal or herd or flock of animals, and “drive” or any like word has a corresponding meaning;

**“Driving licence”** meansa driving licence referred to Chapter IV;

**"Goods Vehicle"** means a motor vehicle other than a motorcar or bus, designed or adapted for the conveyance of goods on a public road and includes a truck-tractor, motorcycle or motor tricycle.

**"Heavy motor vehicle"** means a motor vehicle or a combination of motor vehicles the gross vehicle mass of which vehicle or combination of vehicles exceeds 3,500kg.

**"Licensed Motor Vehicle Attendant"** means a motor vehicle attendant who is the holder of a current licence issued in terms of these Bylaws.

**“Local authority”** means a transitional metropolitan substructure, transitional local council or government body contemplated in section 1 (1) of Local Transition Act, 1993 (Act 209of 1993);

**“Medical practitioner”** means a person registered as such in terms of Medical, Dental and Supplementary Health Services Council Act, 1974 (Act 56 of 1974);

**"Motor Vehicle Attendant"** means a person who, at the request or with the consent of the person in charge of a motor vehicle, undertakes for reward to supervise or take care of such motor vehicle while it is parked in a public street.

**“Municipality”** means the Mkhambathini Municipality or its successors in title and includes the council of that municipality or its executive committee or any other body acting by virtue of any power delegated to it in terms of legislation, as well as any officer to whom the executive committee has delegated any powers and duties with regard to these by-laws.

**Municipal Manager”** means the person appointed as Administrative Head of the or a person acting in such capacity.

**“Minibus”** means a motor vehicle designed or adapted solely or principally for the conveyance of more than nine, but not more than 16 persons including the driver.

**“Midi bus”** means a sub-category of a bus, designed or modified solely or principally for the conveyance of more than 16 and not more than 35 persons (including the driver).

**“*Mutatis mutandis***” is a Latin phrase that means : **All necessary changes having been made** or more broadly:

**“With the necessary changes”** **or “with all due modifications**” It is often used in legal, academic, and formal contexts to indicate that a principle, rule or concept applies, but with necessary adjustments or modifications to accommodate specific circumstances.

**" Park"** means to keep a vehicle, whether occupied or not, stationary for a period of time longer than is reasonably necessary for the actual loading or unloading of persons or goods, but does not include any such keeping of a vehicle by reason of a cause beyond the control of the person in charge of such vehicle;

**"Public road"** means any road, street or thoroughfare or any other place

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| (whether a thoroughfare or not) which is commonly used by the public or any section thereof or to which the public or any section thereof has a right of access, and includes—  (a) the verge of any such road, street or thoroughfare;  (b) any bridge, ferry or drift traversed by any such road, street or thoroughfare; and  (c) any other work or object forming part of or connected with or belonging to such road, street or thoroughfare;  **"Roadway"** means that portion of a road, street or thoroughfare improved, constructed or intended for vehicular traffic which is between the edges of the roadway;  **"Sidewalk"** means that portion of a verge intended for the exclusive use of pedestrians.  "**stopping place**" in relation to—(a)a taxi, means a place designated by the Municipality where a taxi may stop to pick up or drop off passengers, and(b)a bus, means a demarcated stop where a bus may stop to pick up or drop off passengers;  **"Taxi"** means a public motor vehicle designed or adapted solely or principally for the conveyance of not more than nine persons including the driver.  **"The Act"** means the National Road Traffic Act,1996(Act No 93 of 1996) as amended from time to time.  **“The Regulations"** means any regulations promulgated under the Act. |

The words and phrases defined in the Act and the Regulations shall, when used in these Bylaws, bear the same meanings, unless inconsistent with the context.

**Purpose of by-law**

1. To provide for the regulation of traffic control, and road safety within the area of jurisdiction of the Municipality, and to provide for matters incidental thereto.

**Application**

1. This by-law applies to:

1 All public roads and streets within the area of jurisdiction of the Municipality

2 Everyone using or found in the public roads and streets of the Municipality; and.

3 Every property within the area of jurisdiction of the Municipality.

**Powers and duties of authorised official**

4. (1) An authorized official may for the purposes of enforcing this By-law—

(a) when in uniform, require the driver of any vehicle to stop the vehicle;

(b) drive any vehicle where necessary in the performance of duties if, in the case of a motor vehicle, the official is licensed to drive a motor vehicle of the class concerned;

(c) temporarily forbid a person to continue to drive or be in charge of a vehicle and make the arrangements for the safe disposal or placing of the vehicle as may appear necessary or desirable in the circumstances if that person, being the driver or the person apparently in charge of a motor vehicle, appears, by reason of their physical or mental condition, howsoever arising, to be incapable for the time being of driving or being in charge of that vehicle;

(d) regulate and control traffic upon any public road, and give such directions as may appear necessary for the safe and efficient regulation of the traffic, which may include the closing of any public road, and, if it appears that the driver of a motor vehicle is hampering or impeding the normal flow of traffic on a public road, direct the driver to remove the vehicle from the road and to follow another route with the vehicle;

(e) require any person to furnish their name and address and other particulars that are required for identification or for any process if the officer reasonably suspects this person of having committed an offence in terms of this By-law or any other law or, if in the opinion of the officer, that person is able to give evidence in regard to the commission of any such offence;

(f) demand the owner, operator or driver of any motor vehicle to produce any document prescribed in terms of this By-law or any other law; and(g)impound any document produced in terms of paragraph (f), which may afford evidence of a contravention of or failure to comply with any provision of this By-law or any other law related to road traffic matters and if a document is impounded, the official must issue a receipt in respect of the documents to the person concerned.

(2) For the purposes of this section—

(a) a law enforcement officer may only exercise such powers conferred on the officer under his or her certificate of appointment within the municipal area of the Municipality;

(b) a traffic officer, other than a member of a municipal police service, may only exercise powers within the municipal area of the Municipality otherwise in accordance with an appointment under section 3A(1)(d) or (2) of the Act; and

(c) a member of a municipal police service may only exercise powers within the municipal area of the Municipality otherwise in accordance with section 64F(3).

**Driver of motor vehicle to be licensed**

5. No person may drive a motor vehicle on a public road—

(a) except under the authority of and in accordance with the conditions of a licence issued to the driver in terms of the Act or of any document deemed to be a licence for the purposes of the Act; and

(b) unless the driver keeps the licence or document or any other prescribed authorisation in the vehicle.

**Motor vehicle to be licensed**

6. Subject to the provisions of the Act, every motor vehicle in the Municipality must, whether or not it is operated on a public road, be licensed by the owner of that motor vehicle, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, with the relevant licensing authority.

**Driver to have operating licence**

7. (1) Subject to the provisions of section 32 of the Act, a person may only drive a motor vehicle of a class prescribed in terms of that section on a public road if that person—

(a)has a professional driving permit issued in terms of the Act to drive a vehicle of that class;

(b)is in possession of that permit; and

(c)drives the vehicle in accordance with the conditions of that permit.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to the holder of a learner’s licence for that class of vehicle, who drives the motor vehicle while being accompanied by a person registered as a driver in respect of that class of vehicle.

**Operating licence to be produced on demand**

8. (1)The holder of an operating licence must—

1. maintain the operating licence in a good and legible condition; and
2. keep the operating licence in the motor vehicle to which it relates at all relevant times when the vehicle is being operated as a taxi, bus or e-hailing vehicle.

(2) An authorised official may call on the driver of a taxi, bus or e-hailing vehicle to stop and may demand that the driver—

1. produce the operating licence; and
2. give the driver’s full name and address and also the full name and address of the owner of the taxi, bus or e-hailing vehicle.

(3) A driver referred to in subsection (2) may not—

(a) operate a public transport service without a valid operating licence; or

(b) allow the operating licence to be used for a vehicle other than that specified in the operating licence.

### **Unauthorised handing over or abandonment of public transport vehicle**

### 9. No driver of a public transport vehicle may—

### (a) abandon the vehicle being driven; or

### (b) allow any other person to drive the vehicle under the driver’s control without the written consent, in the prescribed form, of the holder of the operating licence or public permit concerned.

### **Display of licence number**

### 10. No person may drive or operate a motor vehicle on a public road if it is not fitted with a number plate at—

### (a)the rear of a trailor or a motor cycle; or

### (b)the front and the rear of any other motor vehicle.

### **Hooter or warning devices**

### 11. No person may operate a vehicle unless it is equipped with a hooter or warning device that is in good working order and capable of emitting a sound that is clearly audible by a person of normal hearing.

#### **Use of Roads Demarcated into Traffic Lanes**

12. (a) When any roadway has been demarcated into traffic lanes, a driver of a vehicle shall drive so as to be entirely within a single traffic lane and shall not cause or permit his vehicle to encroach over any lane line demarcating such traffic lane, except when moving from one lane into or across another.

(b) All vehicles proceeding along any public road demarcated into traffic lanes at less than the normal speed of traffic at the time and place and under the conditions then existing, all animal-drawn vehicles, bicycles and all heavy motor vehicles shall be driven in the left-hand traffic lane then available for traffic or as close as practicable to the left edge of the roadway, except when overtaking another vehicle proceeding in the same direction or when making a right-hand turn.

#### **Vehicles not to be Driven on Sidewalks**

13. No person shall drive, draw or propel any vehicle (other than a perambulator, invalid's chair or the like) upon any footpath or sidewalk designed for use by pedestrians, except when it is necessary to do so to cross (by the shortest route) any such sidewalk or footpath for the purpose of entering or leaving any property abutting thereon.

1. (1) Pedestrians making use of a side-walk shall obey the rule of the road by walking, as far as possible, on the left-hand side of the side-walk.
2. Pedestrians shall not cross a public road at an intersection except by using the pedestrian crossing whilst also obeying the traffic signs at the intersection.

#### **Roller Skating and Use of Soap Box Carts**

15.No person shall use roller-skates, a skateboard, a soapbox cart or any similar article to which rollers or wheels are fixed or cause or permit them to be used upon a public road or sidewalk provided however that the Council in its discretion may authorise the use of such in connection with organised events.

**Driving of cattle/livestock**

1. No one shall drive an animal in the municipal area in such a way that a danger is created.
   1. Livestock shall not be driven through the boundaries of the town of Mkhambathini.
   2. In other business centers within the municipal area the driving of livestock is not allowed except with the written permission of the Municipality.

#### **Control of Parking Places**

16. Whenever the public or any number of persons are entitled or allowed to use, as a parking place, any area of land, including land which is not part of a public road or a public place, authorised officers shall, in cases of emergency or when it is desirable in the public interest, have authority to direct and regulate traffic thereon, and no person shall disregard the instructions of any authorised officer while so engaged.

**Repair of Motor Vehicles on Public Roads Prohibited.**

17. No person shall repair any motor vehicle in any public street or place within the Municipality ; provided that this Bylaw shall not prohibit the carrying out of minor repairs necessitated by a temporary or sudden stoppage of such vehicle for the purpose of setting such vehicle in motion.

#### **Excessive Noise**

18. No person shall operate a motor vehicle upon a public road in such a manner as to cause any excess noise that can be avoided by the exercise of reasonable care on his part.

#### **Parking Restrictions**

19. (1) No person operating or in charge of a vehicle on a public road shall:

* 1. allow such vehicle to remain stationary in a loading zone between the hours of 07:00 and 17:00 Mondays to Fridays and 07:00 to 12:00 Saturdays except where any such day is a Public Holiday or during such other restricted hours as may be specified in respect of any particular loading zone by a road traffic sign or marking.
  2. (i) in the case of a vehicle other than a goods vehicle, for more than five minutes continuously and only while actually loading or off- loading persons or goods and while a licensed driver is in attendance at such vehicle; or

(ii) in the case of a goods vehicle for more than thirty minutes continuously and only while the vehicle is being actually loaded or unloaded.

and no person shall keep any vehicle stationary in a loading zone for any other purpose. The driver of a vehicle, other than a goods vehicle, stationary in a loading zone shall remove such vehicle therefrom immediately upon being directed to do so by an authorised officer, notwithstanding that it has not been stationary therein for longer than the maximum period allowed in respect of a vehicle of that class.

(c ) in the case of a vehicle other than a bus, allow such vehicle to remain stationary in a bus stop between the hours of 06h00 and 18h00.

(d) park such vehicle in any public road within the Municipality for a period beyond that indicated on any road traffic sign duly erected in terms of the Act or regulations as the case may be.

1. No driver or other person in charge of any vehicle which has been parked in a parking area defined as such by road traffic signs shall move such vehicle from the position in which it was parked and again park that vehicle within a distance of 23 metres of the place where it was so parked until an interval of thirty minutes shall have elapsed after so moving such vehicle.
2. No heavy motor vehicle designed, adopted or used for the conveyance of goods shall, without the written permission of the Chief Traffic Officer, be parked by any person between the hours of 19:00 and 05:00 in any part of the municipality which has formally been declared as a town in terms of any applicable law, except on private land or on those portions of public roads on which there have not been displayed road traffic signs regulating such parking.
3. No person shall park a vehicle upon a traffic island, unless directed to do so by an authorised officer.
4. No dealer shall park or allow to be parked in any public road within the Municipality, any vehicle which has been placed in his custody or under his control or which is in his possession for the purpose of sale, exchange or garaging, in the course of any dealers' business carried on by him unless at the time such vehicle is being used for demonstration or testing purposes or is in the course of being delivered to the owner or purchaser thereof.
5. No person responsible for the control of a business of recovering or repairing vehicles shall park, cause or permit to be parked, in any public road or place within the Municipality any vehicle that is in an obvious state of disrepair which has been placed in his charge in the course of the said business.

#### **Exemption of Medical Practitioners Parking Restrictions**

20. (1) A registered medical practitioner or nurse, shall be exempt from the provisions of any law relating to parking in force in the Mkhambathini Municipal area when using, on *bona fide* professional domiciliary visits, a motor vehicle on which is displayed a badge conforming with the requirements of subsection (2) hereof issued on the authority of the Chief Traffic Officer.

(2) (a) The badge shall be a windscreen sticker badge of a design approved by the Chief Traffic Officer, displaying on the face thereof, a serial number, and the name of the person to whom it is issued

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|  | (b) | The badge shall be displayed on the lower nearside corner of the windscreen and shall have a pocket in which is inserted a white card showing the address at which the holder of the badge is actually making a professional domiciliary visit at the time the motor vehicle to which it is affixed is parked. The address shown on the card must be easily legible from outside the vehicle. |
| (3) | (a) | Written application for the issue of a badge shall be made in |
|  |  | a form approved by the Chief Traffic Officer. |
|  | (b) | The Chief Traffic Officer shall keep a register in which he shall record the serial number allocated by him of the badge the issue of which has been authorised by him and the name of the holder. |
|  | (c) | No duplicate badge shall be issued without the prior consent of the Chief Traffic Officer. |
|  | (d) | Where the Chief Traffic Officer, has reason to believe that any holder is abusing the privileges conferred by a badge he/she shall notify the issuing body which shall thereupon withdraw the badge from the holder and the privileges conveyed by the badge shall there-upon cease. |

#### **Prohibitions and Restrictions on Use of Certain Roads by All or Certain Classes of Vehicles**

21 (1) (a) Except with the written permission of the Chief Traffic Officer, no person shall operate any animal drawn vehicle on any public road within the Municipality.

1. In granting any permission in terms of (a) hereof, the Chief Traffic Officer, may impose any restrictions or conditions that he may deem necessary in the interest of traffic.

22. No person—

(a) who is the owner or operator, or is in charge or in control of a motor vehicle may employ or permit any other person to drive that vehicle on a public road unless that other person has—

(i) a valid driver’s licence; or

(ii) a valid learner’s licence and the learner driver is accompanied by a driver with a valid licence;

(b) who is the holder of a learner’s or driver’s licence may allow that licence to be used by any other person;

(c) may operate a motor vehicle of any class contemplated in section 45(1) of the Act as prescribed in the Regulations on a public road unless a valid operator card is displayed on that motor vehicle in the manner the Regulations require.

(d) may, subject to section 42(5) of the Act, operate a motor vehicle referred to in section 42(3) of the Act, unless a valid roadworthy certificate disc issued in terms of the Act is displayed in the manner the Regulations require;

(e) may drive a vehicle on a public road recklessly or negligently; for the purposes of this paragraph, without restricting the ordinary meaning of the word "recklessly", any person who drives a vehicle with wilful or wanton disregard for the safety of persons or property is deemed to drive that vehicle recklessly;

(f) may drive a vehicle on a public road without reasonable consideration for any other person using the road;

(g) may operate a motorcycle or a motor tricycle without wearing a protective helmet with the chin straps tied beneath the chin;

(h) may throw or drop any object out of the window or door of a vehicle including a burning match, cigarette, other burning or smoldering item or material or any item or material capable of spontaneous combustion or self-ignition or any item or material capable of causing the spontaneous combustion of any material in or along a road or any other place;

(i) may, subject to section 58(3) of the Act, while operating a vehicle ignore or disregard a road traffic sign, unless otherwise directed by an authorized official;

(j) may disregard any channeling lines while operating a vehicle;

(k) may, without reasonable cause or without consent of the owner, operator or person in lawful charge of a motor vehicle—

(i) set the vehicle in motion;

(ii) place the vehicle in gear;

(iii) in any way tamper with the machinery, accessories or parts of the vehicle;

(iv) enter or climb upon the vehicle;

(v) ride in or drive a vehicle without the consent of the owner, operator or person in lawful charge of the vehicle; and

(vi) without lawful excuse, tamper with a vehicle or with any part of the equipment or the accessories of the vehicle or willfully damage it or throw any object at that vehicle;

(l) may make a declaration or furnish information that the person knows to be false or misleading;

(m) may refuse to make a declaration or furnish any information required in terms of this Act;

(n) may not use, display or manufacture any number plate that does not comply with the specifications prescribed in the Act; or

(o) may falsify or counterfeit or, with the intent to deceive, replace, alter, deface or mutilate or add anything to a certificate, licence or other document issued or recognised in terms of the Act or be in possession of a certificate, licence or other document that has been falsified or counterfeited or so replaced, altered, defaced or mutilated or to which anything has been added or produce any document to be used for the purposes of the Act which differs in format or in content from a document prescribed under the Act.

#### **Pedestrian Crossings**

23. (1) (a) Where marked pedestrian crossings are in existence within an intersection, no pedestrian shall cross or attempt to cross such intersection except within any such marked pedestrian crossing.

* 1. Wherever a robot (or traffic control light signal) embodying pedestrian signals is in operation at an intersection, no pedestrian shall commence to cross the roadway in any pedestrian crossing at such intersection while the red light of a pedestrian signal is displayed in the direction opposite to that in which he is proceeding; provided that where no pedestrian signals are in operation at an intersection, but such intersection is controlled by a robot (or traffic control light signal), no pedestrian shall commence to cross the roadway in any pedestrian crossing at such intersection while the red light of such robot, or traffic control light signal is displayed in the direction opposite to that in which he is proceeding.
  2. Wherever a robot (or traffic control light signal) embodying pedestrian signals is in operation at a pedestrian crossing elsewhere than at an intersection, no pedestrian shall commence to cross the roadway in such pedestrian crossing when the red light of a pedestrian signal is displayed in the direction opposite to that in which he is proceeding.

1. A pedestrian crossing the roadway within a demarcated pedestrian crossing, whether at an intersection or otherwise, shall walk on the left of such pedestrian crossing.

1. No person or persons shall sit or lie on any sidewalk, footpath or public road, neither shall any persons stand, congregate or walk so as to obstruct the movement of traffic or to the annoyance or inconvenience of the public after being requested by an authorized officer to move on or disperse.

1. No pedestrians, when in or upon a public road, shall carelessly, negligently or recklessly disregard or endanger his own safety or the safety of any person or vehicle using the public road.

#### **Motor Vehicle Attendants**

24 (1) No person shall act as motor vehicle attendant within the

Municipality, except under authority of a written permit granted by the Local Economic Development Office, which permit the Local Economic Development Officer grant, subject to such conditions as he may determine, or refuse.

1. Every permit granted in terms of subsection (1) hereof shall, unless cancelled or suspended in terms of subsection (6) hereof, be valid until the 31st of December of the year of issue.
2. No person authorised in terms of this Bylaw to act as a motor vehicle attendant shall charge any amount for his services in connection with any one motor vehicle, and he shall rely on tips given to him by the driver of such vehicle.
3. Every motor vehicle attendant shall, upon demand by an authorised officer or a member of the public who engages or proposes to engage his services, produce the permit issued to him in terms of subsection (1) hereof.

1. A permit granted in terms of subsection (1) hereof may be revoked or suspended by the Local Economic Development - Officer if the holder thereof -

* 1. commits a breach of this Bylaw or of any condition subject to which the permit was granted.

* 1. leaves unattended any motor vehicle left in his care.
  2. while performing his duties as a motor vehicle attendant, is or becomes intoxicated.
  3. directs the driver of any motor vehicle into an area in which the parking or stopping of vehicles is prohibited.
  4. fails to observe or carry out the lawful instructions of any authorised officer

1. With the exception of a person holding a permit issued in terms of subsection (1) hereof who has been authorised by the Local Economic Development – Officer in writing specifically or generally to do so, or who is acting on the authority or under the control of an authorised officer, no person shall in a public street or public place make an offer to provide care for or supervision of a motor vehicle whilst it is parked in such street or place.

1. No person shall in a public street or public place –
   1. clean or wash any motor vehicle; or
   2. offer to clean or to wash any motor vehicle.

1. No person shall in a public street or public place inform or threaten the driver or person in charge of a motor vehicle that such vehicle will or may suffer damage or be stolen unless it is left in his care or under his supervision.
2. If on a charge of contravening any of the provisions of this section the accused person avers that the driver or person in charge of a motor vehicle made a request of him concerning the motor vehicle, the onus of proof in respect thereof shall rest upon the accused person.

#### **Offences, Penalties and Appeals**

25.The council’s Bylaws Relating to Offences, Penalties and Appeals shall apply **mutatis mutandis** to these bylaws.