

Contradictory messages about access to information

On 28 September 2016 Namibia celebrated with the rest of the world the International Day of Access to Information.

However, on 3 October 2016 *The Namibian* reported that four councillors of the City of Windhoek decided that documents pertaining to land applications with detailed supporting documents including comments of city managers, bank guarantees and company ownerships would not be made publicly available.

The Local Government Act of 1992 gives the public access to minutes of council meetings and other documents. The four councillors made the decision without consulting the whole Council of the City of Windhoek. The secrecy surrounding certain documents is a departure from the tradition where the Council provided access to Council documents that can be scrutinised by any interested person.

The secrecy is also contrary to government's efforts to improve access to information as stated in the Harambee Prosperity Plan, the Access to Information Bill as well as the Whistleblower Protection Bill. There are alleged cartels of councillors and municipality executives who are "bedfellows" with property developers and proxies who



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continuously benefit from land deals. Namibians should demand the right to access information about all council decisions, the business dealings and assets of all political office bearers (not just MPs), public servants and all employed by SOEs and the operations and performance of public institutions. From government's side there seems to be contradictory statements about access to information. The Minister of Information and Communication Technology said on several occasions that Namibia needs a media regulator. However, the President said in September 2016 that Namibia would not have a media regulator. Such contradictory statements by government are not conducive to investor confidence.

References

"City pushed into secrecy".
The Namibian, 3 October 2016.

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Die Republikein 14 October 2016