

Security Policy Formulation in Local Government Councils in Nigeria

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Abstract

Security planning policy making is an essential but regrettably neglected area of the local government council management in Nigeria and one, which has demonstrated serious implications for virtually all aspects of its operations. The need for security planning policy making more than ever before, has become very necessary considering the current sophisticated and complicated security problems and challenges facing the Nigerian state today, especially at the local council levels. The local government councils of recent have to deal with security challenges arising from ethno-religious riots, crises, militant groups like “MEND” in the Niger Delta, Boko Haram in the North East, kidnapping, armed robbery, hired assassins, communal clashes, chieftaincy tussles, activities of touts/transport operators, mismanagement of resources through sharp fraudulent practices, etc. The approach of the local government councils in handling these security problems and challenges has been anything but satisfactory. The councils had adopted reactionary approach by reacting to the challenges as they arise instead of finding a permanent solution to the problem by adopting preventive security strategy which would anticipate and develop security framework to deal with such problems before they are experienced. The best approach for effective and efficient security management at the local government councils in Nigeria is the adoption of an institutionalized framework for security planning formulation and policy making implementation.

Key Words: Security policy; Formulation; Local government councils; Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Security planning policy making is an essential but regrettably neglected area of the local government council management and one, which has implications for virtually all aspects of its operations. In contrast with the USA, United Kingdom, etc., security policy has not received the attention it deserves in Nigeria but now that local government councils all over the country are at risk from an increasing number of threats, public interest in this dilemma is growing. As society changes so does the nature of security problems and many are regarded as endemic with complex socio-economic and even political bases, but their importance cannot be underestimated. As Metcalf (1989) reminds us, no local government council is immune even from the more innocuous outlets for human emotion. The modern local government Chairman must take full responsibility for security and develop policies and a coherent strategy in relation to the crimes and misdemeanors which threaten the survival of the councils.

There are some basic elements involved in security policy formulation. These basic elements include:

People-Centred Policy

It is quite mistaken to consider security only at the planning stage of a building or even to regard security as simply a physical building problem. Security presents a substantial management challenge because it is concerned with a complex interaction between people, buildings, collections and services. Successful policies recognize the central importance of human behaviour in the process, because it is people who commit offences, people who

endeavour to prevent them and people who have to deal with the effects. The ultimate security of the local government council rests with all staff who must be properly trained and fully encouraged in their awareness of security issues. A coherent strategy in which Chairman of the council confronts the problems in a professional and objective manner will assist in developing appropriate attitudes amongst the staff and give them confidence in dealing with unpleasant incidents.

Mission and Costs

Although many local government councils now have mission statements and aims and objectives, security is rarely explicitly mentioned and so it is not surprising that some councils do not perceive development of policy and expenditure on security as a priority. By no means all security measures are costly although some may be both expensive and inconvenient, but the cost of ignoring the risks, both in financial and political terms, can also be high. It is advisable that local government Chairmen build in security into the mission and costs of the councils.

New Technology

New technology is something of a mixed blessing as far as security policy is concerned. Modern sophisticated surveillance systems, intruder alarms and electronic locks can be great assistance, although at some cost, but the introduction of increasing amounts of highly desirable portable computer hardware into local government councils in itself creates a considerable security risks.

The Display of Security Measures

There is some difference in opinion regarding the openness with which to display or advertise security measures and the approach depends to some extent upon whether the local government councils seek to deter and prevent crime or to catch and punish offenders. Since the psychology and motivation of the offender are known to be complex, it is not surprising that this is not a straightforward matter.

Response Policy

A rapid and effective response to all security breaches is a fundamental part of the overall security strategy. Ad hoc reactions to particular events such as announcing the occurrence of thefts on notices or on a public address system are important but insufficient in themselves. It is vital to repair damage and the effects of vandalism immediately to maintain the quality and functioning of the council. Incidents involving people should be dealt with confidently but sympathetically and many councils have produced standard incident report forms to ensure that essential information is recorded. Victims of crime, whether visitors or council staff, may require considerable support and even skilled counseling. The motivation and performance of staff can be severely affected by the occurrence of serious incidents. It is important to provide

an infrastructure which permits staff to express their concerns and discuss policy and which also facilitates the review of policy in the light of experience.

An Approach to Policy Development

Responsibility for the planning and coordinating of security policy must be held at a senior level in the local government council and in common with other areas of management. This should take account of:

The aims and objectives of the local government council;

The regulations and culture of the organization;

Current legislation;

The resources available.

Security Audit

A useful approach is to conduct a security audit of the local government council, as if one was a newly appointed Executive Chairman or a security consultant charged with responsibility for identifying security risks, assessing the adequacy of security policy and making recommendations for improving. Such an audit could examine the following questions:

Does the local government council have a security policy?

What are the current security risks? Identify and assess the risks in relation to the building, its equipment, and the staff. Encourage local government council staff at all levels to do likewise, preferably on a standard reporting form.

Build up a profile of recent incidents and analysis trends. Discuss the crime profile of the area with the security men within the local government council and the local public.

Assess the adequacy of current security measures.

Examine current arrangements for responding to incidents and reporting procedures. Determine whether experience gained from incidents is satisfactorily fed back into policy discussion.

Identify who has overall responsibility for planning and coordinating security arrangements. Is communication regarding security amongst the staff satisfactory?

Assess the extent of security awareness amongst staff and the effectiveness of staff training. Are staff manuals available providing clear statements regarding security policy and procedures?

Examine current local government council rules and regulations in relation to those of the organization. Are they effective in dealing with unacceptable behaviour in the local government councils?

How good are relationships with other professionals involved in security, e.g. the local police and security men? How adequate are the insurance arrangements?

What resources are currently deployed on security and what is the cost of dealing with the existing level of crime and misdemeanors? What priority is given to security in

relation to other areas of policy?

Having conducted the audit, the local government council;

Where graffiti is a problem consider anti-graffiti coatings or even murals;

Ground levels windows, door, air vents and other potential points of entry such as skylights, roof hatches and gratings etc.

Windows

Windows represent an open invitation to vandals or intruders, e.g. Unbarred windows with ordinary glass at ground level;

Consider the type of glass used – laminated glass is preferred;

Openable windows from which things can be thrown out;

The quality of locks on openable windows.

External Doors

Doors which open into vulnerable quiet areas or can be easily opened from the outside;

Doors should be strong, light-fitting and equipped with high security locks, hinges and glazing;

Door frames should be made of metal or if made of wood should have reinforced hinges which should be on the inside;

Emergency exits need alarms to signal unauthorized use, preferably a remote alarm to alert staff;

Are locks and keys up to modern standards? What are key security arrangements?

CONCLUSION

Security policy is an essential element in the management of local government councils and many potentially damaging situations can be avoided or alleviated by effective forward planning and good management policies. The Chairman must decide upon the priority to be given to security and must ensure that the necessary resources are allocated.

Although security policy can often be in conflict with other areas of policy, unless local government staff themselves consciously place security matters high in their priorities for determined and cooperative action, progress will be limited (Smethurst, 1991). Security policy poses a substantial challenge for Chairmen of local government councils and there can be little doubt that security concerns will continue to influence effective mortal's chiefest enemy (Macbeth, Act III Scene V).

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