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Research Report:

**Political Oversight on Service Delivery and Environmental
Sustainability: A Case Study of the City of Johannesburg
Metropolitan Municipality's Pikitup Waste Management System**

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DECLARATION

I, Mamokgethi Ruth Molopyane (student no: 698843), declare that this master's research report, titled 'Political Oversight on Service Delivery and Environmental Sustainability: A Case Study of Pikitup Johannesburg Waste Management System,' is my own work, except where I have cited or acknowledged sources. This report has not previously been submitted, either in part or in full, for a degree at any university.



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Thank you, Professor David Dickinson, for your invaluable guidance and supervision.

To my beloved late wife, Emma, you always imagined great things for me during our eighteen years together. I am thankful that you urged me to register for this degree. To my dearly departed best friend Poppie, here we are. Thank you.

In honour of bo Rra Molopyane, especially my late fathers (twins) Motsepe and Ramafší, ke a leboga fa lo mpatapatile, lo nketeletse pele le go ntsosa moa.

I am grateful to my therapist, who stood by my side during my bereavement in 2024 and continues to support me, as do my friends Charm and Gill, whose constant encouragement and unconditional love mean so much. With gratitude, I bow.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
ARO	African Reclaimers Organisation
AWTTs	Alternative Waste Treatment Technologies
BoD	Board of Directors
C40	Global Network Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40)
CAPEX	Capital Expenditure
CC	Climate Change
CE	Circular Economy
CoJ	City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality
DA	Democratic Alliance
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
EISD	Environment and Infrastructure Services Department
EIS	Environment and Infrastructure Services
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programmes
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
GDARD	Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDS 2040	Growth Development Strategy 2040 – City of Johannesburg
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GLU	Government of Local Unity
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IWMP	Integrated Waste Management Plan
JMPD	Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD)
KPIs	Key performance indicators
LFG	Landfill gas
MMC	Member of the Mayoral Council
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
MOE	Municipal Owned Entities
MPAC	Municipal Public Accounts Committee
MStA	Municipal Structures Act (Structures Act)

MSA	Municipal Systems Act (Systems Act)
MRF	Materials Recovery Facility
MSW	Municipal Solid Waste
NDP	National Development Plan
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act
NEMWA	National Environmental Management: Waste Act
NPM	New Public Management
NWMS	National Waste Management Strategy
RCR	Refuse Collection Rounds
S@S	Separation at Source
S79	Section 79 Committee
SDBIP	Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
WMS	Waste Management Services
WtE	Waste-to-Energy

ABSTRACT

This research examines the challenges of balancing waste service delivery with environmental sustainability in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality (hereinafter referred to as the CoJ). To evaluate these challenges, interviews were conducted with councillors on the city's Environmental and Infrastructure (Section 79) Committee, officials from the city's Environment and Infrastructure Services Department (EISD), Pikitup managers, and a waste management expert.

The dilemma arises from conflicting objectives: the significant initial investments required for alternative waste treatment, waste reduction, and recycling facilities clash with the need to improve waste collection and services for an increasing urban population. Moreover, in the CoJ, political dynamics influence the committee's oversight activities: 1) short-term political priorities overshadow long-term environmental protection; 2) politicians prioritise other social needs over waste management; 3) coalition instability leads to frequent changes in leadership, disrupting the committee's oversight of waste management; and 4) political neglect of the issue fosters a poorly managed waste cycle, resulting in inadequate services, illegal dumping, and compliance failures at landfills.

The research explores how (i) decentralised waste management in CoJ, intended to create multiple reporting lines for checks and balances, has resulted in oversight paralysis, (ii) the effectiveness of the committee is constrained by insufficient oversight time in a highly technical portfolio and, (iii) there exists a knowledge gap concerning the technical aspects of waste management systems among the committee, Pikitup, and EISD.

The research also finds that transitioning to a circular economy model with waste reclaimers is feasible; however, this poses challenges. The research contributes to our knowledge of the waste governance discourse and asserts that politicians must prioritise waste management to balance service delivery with environmental sustainability in urban areas.

1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Many politicians—and indeed many voters—routinely treat environmental action as critical yet not urgent.

And so generation after generation of two- or four-year cycle politicians add to the pileup of deferrable actions deferred.

With rare exceptions, in the domain of slow violence “yes, but not now, not yet” becomes the *modus operandi*.

Rob Nixon (2011)

1.1 Foreword

In South Africa, municipal governance functions through legislative oversight mechanisms that ensure democratic accountability and the provision of effective service delivery (Fourie & Waldt, 2023; Janda & Masango, 2024; Maganoe, 2023). The Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Services Committee plays a vital role as a political oversight body within the institutional framework of the CoJ (Khalo, 2013; Kraai et al., 2017; Madue, 2013; Manona, 2015; Van der Waldt, 2015). The committee, established under the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 (Binza, 2005; De Visser, 2009; Van der Waldt, 2006), is responsible for overseeing environmental and infrastructure services, including waste management activities that directly impact both service delivery outcomes and environmental standards (City of Johannesburg, 2024).

The research focuses on examining the political oversight role of the Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Services Committee in the CoJ's waste management governance using Pikitup as the case study. The central focus of the study is on the inherent tension between waste service delivery and environmental protection, and how the Section 79 Committee navigates the inherent tension between meeting the immediate service delivery demands of a rapidly urbanising city while ensuring environmental sustainability in waste management practices.

The significance of the study highlights the critical role of the Section 79 Environmental Infrastructure Services (EIS) Committee in the CoJ, particularly its function as a political oversight body responsible for monitoring environmental objectives and evaluating the service delivery performance of Pikitup, which operates as the primary waste removal service provider for the CoJ.

The challenge that the committee faces is balancing the competing demands of efficient service delivery with environmental protection objectives. Specifically, what makes this challenge notable grounds the exploration of the study. The background of the study is presented below.

1.2 Background

The Constitution mandates that municipalities lead sustainable service delivery and develop long-term strategies to strengthen the developmental state (De Visser, 2009). One such strategy is the CoJ Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which centres on five-year programmes aligned with the current term of office and the mayor's priorities (City of Johannesburg, 2022). While the plan recognises the necessity for improved waste management, the municipality often overlooks waste services because the emphasis is on visible infrastructure projects and economic development initiatives.

Recent studies indicate a gap between the IDP goals and actual service delivery, as reflected in the frequency of protests concerning the reality of unaddressed service delivery failures (Thabang et al., 2023; Thusi & Selepe, 2023; Zindi & Ndhlovu, 2023). This disconnection shows why the plan fails to address the link between waste management and environmental decay.

The CoJ faces pressure to deliver essential services due to rapid urbanisation and population growth. These basic public services are essential for residents' living standards, including electricity, water, sanitation, waste management, and public safety services.

The CoJ has also struggled to meet rising service demands as urban expansion intensifies and spreads outward. When municipal service delivery is constrained, waste collection, recycling, and disposal present challenges, resulting in service backlogs and disruptions (Godfrey et al., 2019). This is significant.

Oelofse and Godfrey (2008) have demonstrated that residents often resort to illegal dumping and waste burning in response to service delivery failures.

The cyclical relationship between waste management, service delivery, and the environment is explained below.

1.2.1 Triple Spiral: Challenges in Waste Management Impede Service Delivery and Damage the Environment

Poor waste management leads to service delivery failures, establishing a cycle that contributes to environmental degradation (Rasmeni & Madyira, 2019). Over time, this cycle hinders the adoption of efficient waste management practices and systems (N. Kubanza & Simatele, 2020). These interrelated issues present a dynamic challenge for the CoJ because they influence each other, especially considering that 80-90% of municipal solid waste (MSW) is disposed of in landfills (Godfrey & Oelofse, 2017a).

Inefficiencies in waste management systems directly affect the effectiveness of service delivery (Karani & Jewasikiewitz, 2007). In particular, inadequate, underfunded, and poorly maintained infrastructure leads to breakdowns and infrequent waste removal (Rasmeni & Madyira, 2019).

Consequently, these failures result in environmental damage, including soil and water contamination and declining air quality (Daso et al., 2019; Siddiqua et al., 2022; Vinti et al., 2021). This exerts pressure on the existing waste management system, as Pikitup's facilities and services cannot keep pace with the increase in waste generation (Gambe et al., 2023; Nyika & Dinka, 2023).

As a result, illegal waste dumping has proliferated across the city and is not limited to the outskirts. This signifies improper disposal and underscores the inadequacy of waste

management infrastructure and restricted access, contributing to environmental degradation (Vaverková, 2019).

Effective waste management is vital for cities. *Cities Today* (2020) reports that it plays a key role in public health and necessitates efficient systems to minimise waste sent to landfills. This suggests that municipalities should establish recycling and waste separation programs to minimise waste being disposed of in landfills; the environmental impact of the latter will be explored later (International Solid Waste Association, 2024).

Simply recognising that poor waste management impacts service quality and has environmental consequences is not enough because urban expansion profoundly influences the former. Understanding the significance of accountability in ecological waste management requires situating the CoJ within the broader discussion of cities and their impacts. As cities grow, they increase in area, expand outward to the peripheral outskirts, become denser, and produce more waste because of changed consumption patterns (Ahmad, 2010; Beall & Fox, 2009; Gunter & Massey, 2020; Thomson & Newman, 2020; Turok, 2021).

1.2.2 Cities and Urbanisation

Urban spaces have always been important hubs of commerce, fostering economic development (Costinot & Donaldson, 2012; Ricardo, 1821, 1955; Smith, 1776). Cities are intertwined with nature, impacting and being impacted by it (Clark & Foster, 2021). Urban life also depends on nature for essential resources and sustenance, with the environment being vital to the survival of cities (Moore, 2015; Pincetl, 2017). As such, cities profoundly shape the environment.

Cities contribute to environmental degradation in four ways. Firstly, contemporary cities generate 50% of global waste and contribute around 75% of greenhouse gas emissions, which makes their role crucial for environmental change (Williams, 2021). Secondly, half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and projections suggest that this figure will increase to 68% by 2050 (United Nations, 2018). Thirdly, this growth of cities has led to the consumption of more than half of the world's resources (Gue et al., 2022). Fourthly, cities represent 80% of the global gross domestic product (GDP) making them drivers of

economic growth, and job creation but also posing a threat to the environment and contributing to carbon emission growth (World Bank, 2023).

Considering their populations and resource consumption, the investments in infrastructure position cities as significant economic contributors to development (Cobbinah et al., 2015).

The United Nations World Urbanisation Prospects estimates that the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality (CoJ) population is around 6.3 million (UN, 2022). This number is shaped by natural growth, migration, and urban expansion as people relocate to the city for job opportunities, enhanced services, and better living conditions (Abrahams & Everatt, 2019; Ballard et al., 2021; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2015; Todes et al., 2018). In this context, the CoJ waste management services face pressure to meet demands due to its infrastructure's inability to manage the increasing waste production (Adeleke et al., 2022; Godfrey et al., 2019; Nyika & Dinka, 2023; Kubanza & Simatele, 2020).

The CoJ admits that although a sustainable city is the desired outcome, the municipality must prioritise delivering quality and efficient services to the citizens (Joburg 2040 Growth Development Strategy, 2011). In other words, it must prioritise immediate community needs over environmental protection.

Therefore, with continued urbanisation, the inefficiencies in waste management lead to cascading issues affecting service delivery and the environment, as previously demonstrated when discussing the triple spiral effect. Furthermore, urban expansion significantly affects the environment due to the immense scale of resources and infrastructure required to satisfy the growing demand for services, intensifying ecological degradation (Ballard et al., 2021; Beall & Fox, 2009; Kanai & Schindler, 2022; Shatkin, 2022; Ying et al., 2022). Another way rapid urban growth affects waste management is that the focus shifts to immediate urban needs rather than long-term environmental issues (Adeleke et al., 2022; Ayeleru et al., 2016, 2018).

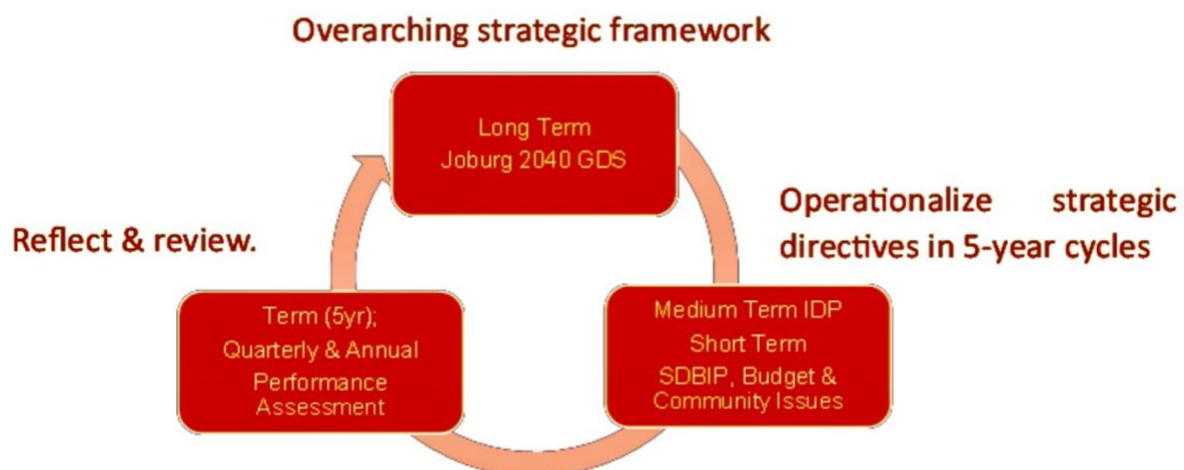
1.2.3 Local Government Tasked to Deliver Services

What has been discussed thus far illustrates a contemporary urban management challenge for the CoJ: the relationship between urban growth and its effects on infrastructure, service delivery, and waste management systems.

The Constitution of South Africa (1996) facilitated the establishment of national, provincial, and local governments. The latter was granted the authority to ensure sustainable service delivery to communities (De Visser, 2009; Fourie & Waldt, 2023; Van der Waldt, 2006). It was also tasked with improving the lives of people with limited access to essential services (Koma, 2010). Crucially, being close to the community enables the local government to accurately identify, understand, and address challenges in service delivery.

The CoJ's long-term service delivery vision is outlined in the Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) 2040 and implemented through the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), and related business plans, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Service Delivery Budget Implementation Framework 2024/25



Source: City of Johannesburg Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) 2024/25

Despite South Africa's notable post-apartheid progress, the effects of apartheid's spatial planning and uneven service delivery persist (Gunter & Massey, 2020). For example, access to refuse removal after the waste reclassification in 2009 increased from 55% to 72% in 2013 (Department of Environmental Affairs, 2013), while access to basic sanitation increased from 50% in 1994/1995 to 83% of households in 2011/2012 (Meyiwa et al., 2014).

The current state of waste management facilities and services presents significant challenges for the CoJ (Godfrey et al., 2019; Nyika & Dinka, 2023; Rasmeni & Madyira, 2019). The municipality must address historic underservicing in some areas while expanding services to meet urban demands. Thus, the effective management of municipal solid waste (MSW) forms part of the CoJ's provision of basic waste services, which is overseen by the city-owned entity, Pikitup.

1.2.4 The Governance of Waste Management in CoJ

The research also explores the convergence of multilayered accountability, environmental management, and the efficiency of waste management services in Pikitup. Among the several layers is the political oversight from the Section 79 EIS committee and operational oversight from the Environment and Infrastructure Services Department (EISD), the latter being the municipal department that oversees operations and provides strategic oversight.

It is crucial to emphasise that political oversight and operational management occur within the governance framework, which includes various established accountability authorities with distinct roles, responsibilities, and expectations for Pikitup. This frequently leads to duplication and delays in decision-making (Baloyi, 2023; Janda & Masango, 2024), and can lead to paralysis due to excessive oversight (De Visser, 2009; Van der Walddt, 2015).

Although intended to ensure thorough checks and balances and strong accountability, the proliferation of multiple oversights can hinder effective service delivery (De Visser, 2009). Furthermore, the complex governance structure complicates Pikitup's responses

to emerging environmental challenges. One key finding from a recent study on municipal governance is that political short-termism poses a significant obstacle to long-term planning (Maranga, 2021).

1.2.5 Oversight Committee on Waste Management in the CoJ

The research also highlights how institutional oversight affects municipal governance, clarifying why waste management is not a political priority in Johannesburg. The political oversight provided by the Section 79 EIS Committee is central to the research and serves as a vital mechanism in local governance throughout South Africa. Table 1 below details the committee's functions and roles, demonstrating its extensive oversight role.

Table 1: Functions and Roles of the Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Services Committee

Legislative role - Consider and make recommendations to Council on IDP, Budget and By-law Process. Oversight of the development of the IDP and budget in respect of the Environment and Infrastructure Services Department (EISD), Johannesburg Water, Johannesburg City Power and Pikitup. - Give consideration to the quarterly and annual performance reports of the EISD, Johannesburg Water, Johannesburg City Power and Pikitup. - Exercise oversight over the development and implementation of all by-laws, strategies and policies of the EISD. - Give consideration and oversight to draft tariffs, fees and charges in respect of environmental, infrastructure and services functions in the City.
Oversight role - Exercise oversight over the quarterly and annual performance of the EISD, Johannesburg Water, Johannesburg City Power and Pikitup. - Exercise oversight over any matter referred to the Committee by the Speaker, Council and/or its Programming Committee.

• Exercise oversight over any matter or activity of the EISD, Johannesburg Water, Johannesburg City Power and Pikitup. • Invite the MMC or any official of the EISD to account on any matter of interest to the Committee.
Participatory and representative role • Promote public participation in the Committee's activities. • Ensure public consultation on any new by-law referred by the Speaker, Council and/or Programming Committee. • Promote public participation in the key planning processes of the City as they relate to the EISD.
Report/recommendations to Council • Make recommendations to council on oversight process. • Report on oversight site visits to entities, projects and facilities to Council. • Report on quarterly and annual reports. • Submit proposal/comments on Provincial and National Bills and proposed policies affecting local government.

(Source: City of Johannesburg website, 2024)

The committee supervises waste management and environmental objectives in the city. In its oversight role, the committee monitors Pikitup's performance and assesses its service delivery. Monitoring and evaluating are crucial components of municipal oversight to hold executives accountable and ensure consistency in service provision (Janda & Masango, 2024; Maganoe, 2023; Manona, 2015; Moila, 2023).

A central challenge for the committee is balancing service delivery demands with environmental protection. Is it truly possible to achieve a balance between the two? Or are there unavoidable trade-offs?

In theory, as the committee operates as an extension of the Council's authority, it should be properly equipped to address the environmental impacts of waste management services. However, its advisory role limits this capacity.

Political and institutional challenges within the CoJ intensify the conflict between waste management and environmental protection. The committee's effectiveness is greatly shaped by the political environment in which it operates. Furthermore, politicians tend to prioritise immediate, visible service delivery over environmental concerns, which rank lower on the agenda. Political considerations significantly influence resource allocation and policy implementation. This political context shapes the prioritisation of other social services, favouring waste management.

Although environmental destruction is not a future event, it is happening now in a rapidly urbanising world. This crisis threatens to breach planetary boundaries (Brand et al., 2021; Rockström et al., 2009). In other words, humans are pushing earth's critical systems, which are essential for life, beyond safe limits. The complex accountability structure of municipal oversight, where entities report to multiple authorities affects the committee's efforts to balance service delivery with environmental concerns (Janda & Masango, 2024; Kraai et al., 2017; Maganoe, 2023).

However, the Section 79 EIS Committee also faces non-political obstacles, such as limited technical knowledge, inadequate resources, and insufficient support staff (Fourie & Waldt, 2023; Mokgari & Pwaka, 2018).

The technical knowledge gap creates an information gap between the committee and managers from Pikitup, as well as officials from the EISD, where the managers and officials possess technical expertise.

1.3 Conclusion

A recurring theme in this introduction is the interconnections and interactions of (i) the cyclical relationship between waste management, service delivery, and environmental degradation, along with their impacts on one another, (ii) the growth of cities, waste management, and service delivery, which subsequently exerts pressure on the CoJ infrastructure to meet the increased demand, (iii) the multilayered governance structure in waste management, where overlapping accountability affects oversight, and (iv) the

municipal political landscape that prioritises immediate political benefits instead of a sustainable waste management strategy and environmental protection.

The complexity of these relationships directly impacts (i) operational needs and environmental concerns, (ii) the effectiveness of service delivery, and (iii) balancing immediate service delivery and long-term sustainability.

As such, this research argues that to understand the political oversight of the Section 79 EIS Committee in reconciling waste management service delivery with environmental goals, we must consider the context in which these occur as the basis for action. Additionally, the research refrains from policy recommendations, which often seem clichéd and impractical. Instead, it focuses on aspects contributing to transforming current waste management practices and reconciling conflicting objectives in the public policy discourse.

1.4 Research Question

The decision to prioritise other municipal services over waste management services is an outcome of significant political deprioritisation, which leads to underinvestment, particularly in infrastructure like landfill sites. Therefore, addressing the tension between delivering services effectively and developing sustainable waste management practices would enrich ongoing debates surrounding urban issues and the environment.

The study investigates Pikitup's responsibility for delivering waste removal services, focusing mainly on the environmental impact of landfill sites. This study asks: *What role does political oversight in the CoJ municipality play in tackling the tensions between waste management service delivery and environmental impact?*

The study employed qualitative research based on interpretive social science methods to explore the dynamics of political oversight in the CoJ waste management system (J. W. Creswell & Poth, 2016). This approach effectively examined the relationships among political actors and evaluated current oversight mechanisms in balancing reliable waste

service delivery with environmental sustainability. Additionally, it enabled the researcher to understand political oversight in waste management through the meanings assigned by participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The interpretive lens captured personal experiences and perspectives of participants in waste management governance, providing a deeper understanding of political oversight beyond mere policy (Tisdell et al., 2025).

The qualitative approach guided data collection by highlighting the need for rich, contextual data to illuminate the research question (Patton, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method, allowing participants to share their views on the balance between service delivery and environmental protection through political oversight. The approach offered flexibility to explore emerging themes while maintaining focus on the research question (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Furthermore, document analysis complemented interview data by revealing insights into formal oversight structures and policy frameworks through a thorough examination of these documents (Bowen, 2009).

The observation of the Kya Sands landfill site revealed actual conditions, unmediated evidence, operational processes, and environmental impacts that can validate, challenge, or enrich participants' perspectives from the interviews (J. W. Creswell & Poth, 2016; Yin, 2009).

The qualitative orientation, grounded in interpretivist epistemology, was essential for examining how political oversight operates when addressing tensions between service delivery and environmental sustainability. Moreover, the methodology effectively tackled the research question by revealing how political actors navigate tensions between service delivery demands and environmental concerns in the Pikitup case study.

A short overview of the chapters is presented after this background.

1.5 Report Outline

Chapter one provides an introduction. It begins by looking at the role of cities in environmental degradation, addresses the local government's constitutional mandate on service delivery, and discusses waste management challenges in CoJ. It concludes with the study's rationale and research question.

Chapter two presents a literature review on local government since 1994. It highlights public sector reforms via New Public Management (NPM) that led to the establishment of Pikitup and other municipal entities. The review also assesses service delivery of Section 79 Committees, focusing on the Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Services (EIS) Committee's role in the CoJ's waste management.

Chapter three outlines the methodology used to conduct the research. The study employed a qualitative approach. Purposive sampling was utilised as the participants were preselected to provide information relevant to the topic.

The research findings are organised into four thematic areas presented across two chapters. Chapter four analyses political accountability in waste governance systems within the CoJ and explores different perspectives on the effectiveness of political oversight. Chapter five examines the impact of frequent leadership changes in the CoJ and explores the challenge of balancing service delivery needs with environmental sustainability.

Chapter six provides concluding thoughts and reflections.

2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Municipal solid waste management in the CoJ illustrates the complex interconnections between the environment, service delivery, and governance structures. This chapter examines oversight management, the evolution of local government post-apartheid, and the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) principles within the public sector. It connects NPM reforms to municipal-owned entities (MOEs) and considers the CoJ's service delivery in terms of urbanisation, waste management, and environmental impact. It concludes with a summary of key insights.

2.1 Oversight Management

This section conceptualises oversight management in local government, utilising literature to analyse the role of Section 79 committees in evaluating service delivery, particularly the Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Services (EIS) Committee. Understanding the environmental implications of waste service delivery necessitates recognising the evolution of local governance in post-apartheid South Africa. Below is a brief overview.

2.2 The Development of Local Government Post-1994

Before the establishment of South Africa as a democratic state, local governance and service delivery were significantly affected by the racial segregation policies and spatial planning of apartheid, leading to unequal access to basic services (Abrahams & Everatt, 2019; Ballard et al., 2021; Mlambo, 2018; Parnell, 2004; Pieterse, 2009).

As de Visser (2009, p. 8) recounts, “local government as an institution was racist and illegitimate.” Therefore, the Constitution mandated a shift in local governance after 1994, creating a new local government designed to drive a non-racial developmental state that would benefit all citizens equally (Vinti et al., 2021).

In the context of local government, the Constitution of 1996 assigned the local government to be the active driver of development in a democratic South Africa. Four essential laws form the basis for local government development and governance, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Legislative Frameworks Regulating Local Government



Source: compiled by the researcher

Section 152 (1) of the Constitution defines the role and objectives of the local government, which include, among others:

- to promote social and economic development
- to promote a safe and healthy environment
- to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner

The Municipality Structures Act of 1998 (Structures Act) facilitated the establishment of municipalities, outlining their categories, administrative functions, and the role of the Municipal Council (Gumede & Dipholo, 2014; Koma, 2010; Munzhedzi, 2016). According to van der Walddt (2015), the Council is elected by electorates and has the constitutional power to oversee municipal administration and executive roles, serving as the municipality's legislative authority and central political framework.

Two years later, the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 (Systems Act) was enacted, introducing a framework that ensured local government accountability and a vision for municipalities to engage with citizens in participative development planning (De Visser, 2009; Paradza et al., 2010).

Finally, the Municipal Financial Management Act of 2003 (MFMA) governs financial management, promoting efficiency, accountability, and transparency in the use of public resources (Hamza, 2023). These three pieces of legislation represent a significant milestone in South Africa's democratic governance.

Within this framework, municipalities were created, their roles and responsibilities clarified, and a new approach to municipal governance was introduced. These new municipalities were also tasked with providing electricity, housing, sanitation, and water services and maintaining and upgrading waste management infrastructure (Kemp et al., 2020; Koma, 2010; Mabeba, 2021; Makhathini et al., 2020; Prins et al., 2023). In this context, local government serves as the conduit for service delivery and promotes development.

However, research indicates that local governments often face challenges in delivering services arising from financial and operational difficulties, crumbling infrastructure, and political interference. These challenges ultimately result in ineffective services (Allan & Heese, 2011; Karodia, 2010; Khale & Worku, 2013; Mafunisa, 2007; Manona, 2015; Masehela et al., 2012; Thusi & Selepe, 2023; Zindi & Ndhlovu, 2023).

The evolution of local government has been guided by laws promoting good governance for effective municipal service delivery since 1994. However, challenges persist despite existing accountability, transparency, and efficiency mechanisms. The following subsection examines oversight management.

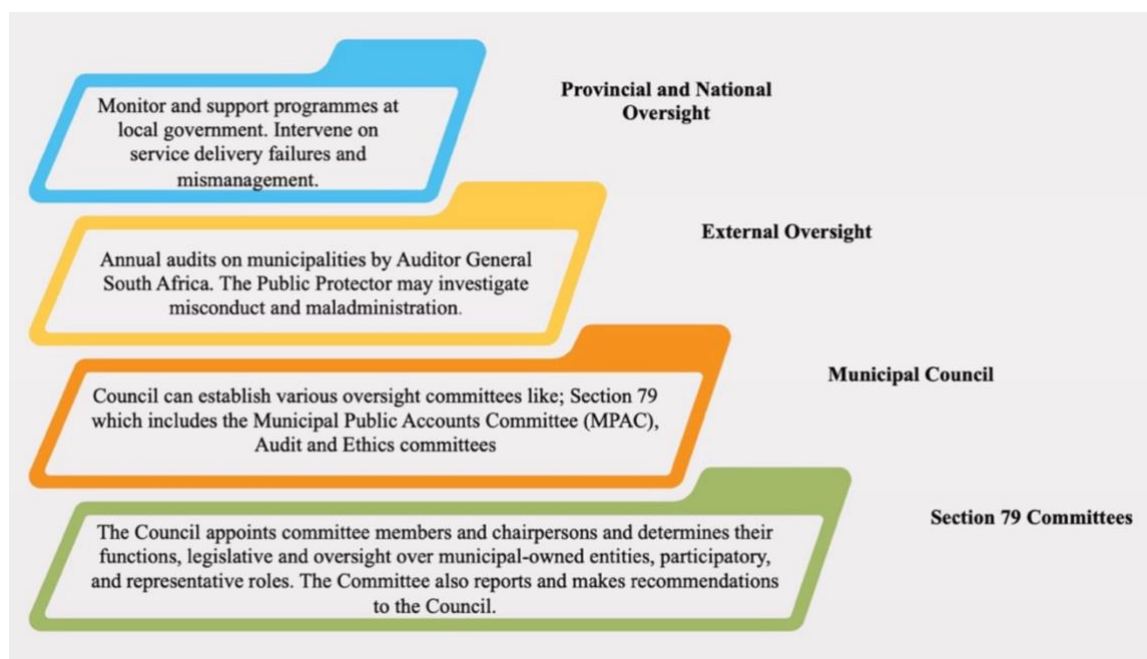
2.2.1 Local Government Oversight Framework

Defining oversight management is key to clarifying its significance in local government service delivery. Oversight management denotes a systematic process of monitoring and evaluation that guarantees that local government operations will lead to effective service

delivery (Fourie & Waldt, 2023; Janda & Masango, 2024; Onyango, 2020). At the same time, oversight is defined as “the means by which the executive and other persons in government are called to account” (Madue, 2013, p. 43). The 1996 Constitution established the foundation for governance and legislative oversight (Kraai et al., 2017a; Moji et al., 2022) in democratic South Africa. Section 152 states that local governments must practice democratic and accountable governance (Van der Waldt, 2015).

Different mechanisms have been established to ensure accountability, transparency, and effective municipal governance (Binza, 2005; De Visser, 2009; Koma, 2010), as shown in Figure 3 below. Additionally, external entities offer oversight of local government, particularly in struggling municipalities that require intervention to prevent collapse (Masehela et al., 2012).

Figure 3: Oversight Mechanisms in Local Government



Source: compiled by the researcher

Crucially, the Structures Act establishes a framework for supervising local governments by enshrining the constitutional obligation for democratic governance and sustainable service delivery (Koma, 2010). The Act defines the structural composition of municipalities and specifies their roles, responsibilities and oversight requirements.

According to de Visser (2009), the Act (117 of 1998) further established municipal oversight, positioning the Council at the apex and various committees as oversight bodies that ensure accountability for the municipality's executive management. The Systems Act (53 of 2000) and the MFMA (56 of 2003) reinforce the importance of oversight management. For example, a municipal council must oversee the executive (mayor and mayoral committee) and administration by conducting performance evaluations, and it may delegate this responsibility to specialised committees (Fourie & Waldt, 2023).

Nonetheless, experts in governance argue that overlapping oversight mechanisms result in accountability gaps and hinder the supervision of service delivery (Baloyi, 2023; Kraai et al., 2017; Maganoe, 2023; Manona, 2015; Mokgari & Pwaka, 2018; Onyango, 2020; Van der Waldt, 2015, 2015). For example, Koma (2010) argues that the unclear delineation of roles impacts infrastructure development and its subsequent maintenance due to delayed decision-making, postponed approvals, shifts in budget priorities, and weak consequence management. Clear delineation of roles is crucial for sustainable and effective waste management in Johannesburg. Lack of clarity poses a significant challenge to efficient governance and service delivery.

2.2.2 The Implications of Coalition Government in Johannesburg

Coalition government poses different challenges within the municipality, significantly affecting service delivery and oversight (Beukes & De Visser, 2021; Joshua et al., 2022; Pietersen, 2021). According to Thorne (2024), from 2014 to 2024, the CoJ experienced rapid change in leadership, resulting in eleven mayors during that period. Since 2021, the municipality has experienced various administrations due to an escalating coalition crisis, leading to the election of eight mayors (Pholoma et al., 2024), as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: List of Mayors since the Coalition Governance of the CoJ Municipality

Name	Term in Office		Political Party
	Start	End	
Herman Mashaba	August 2016	November 2021	Democratic Alliance
Geoff Makhubu	December 2019	July 2021	African National Congress
Jolidee Matongo	August 2021	September 2021	African National Congress
Mpho Moerane	October 2021	November 2021	African National Congress
Mpho Phalatse	November 2021	September 2022	Democratic Alliance
Dada Morero	September 2022	October 2022	African National Congress
Mpho Phalatse	October 2022	January 2023	Democratic Alliance
Thapelo Ahmad	January 2023	April 2023	Al Jama-ah
Kabelo Gwamanda	May 2023	August 2024	Al Jama-ah
Dada Morero	August 2024	Present	African National Congress

Source: Wikipedia

The table shows that from 2021 to 2024, some mayors served terms shorter than six months. This trend makes long-term planning and enforcing consequences for poor waste management challenging.

Scholars argue that frequent mayoral turnover causes political instability in three ways. Firstly, these changes disrupt oversight by reorganising politicians, undermining stability and promoting short-term thinking (Mathekga & Buccus, 2006). Secondly, this turnover adversely affects the provision of essential services. Lastly, leadership changes compromise the fundamental principles of accountable governance (Beukes & De Visser, 2021; Joshua et al., 2022; Pholoma et al., 2024). As a result, the instability of the coalition government hampers its ability to deliver adequate services, primarily due to its focus on politics.

In conclusion, unstable coalitions hinder oversight and obstruct effective long-term planning, vital for waste management and infrastructure development. The following section focuses on oversight committees.

2.2.3 The Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Oversight Committee

This research focuses on the Environment and Infrastructure Services (EIS) committee, one of several Section 79 committees established by the CoJ council. Before we explore the EIS committee, it is vital to provide some background on the Section 79 committees. These municipal oversight committees are created under the Structures Act, specifically Section 79 (Khalo, 2013; Kraai et al., 2017; Manona, 2015; Mokgari & Pwaka, 2018; Van der Walddt, 2015; Van Niekerk & Sebakamotse, 2020).

Van der Walt (2015) describes Section 79 committees as political oversight entities constituted by elected municipal councillors. They are essential for implementing checks and balances and public accountability.

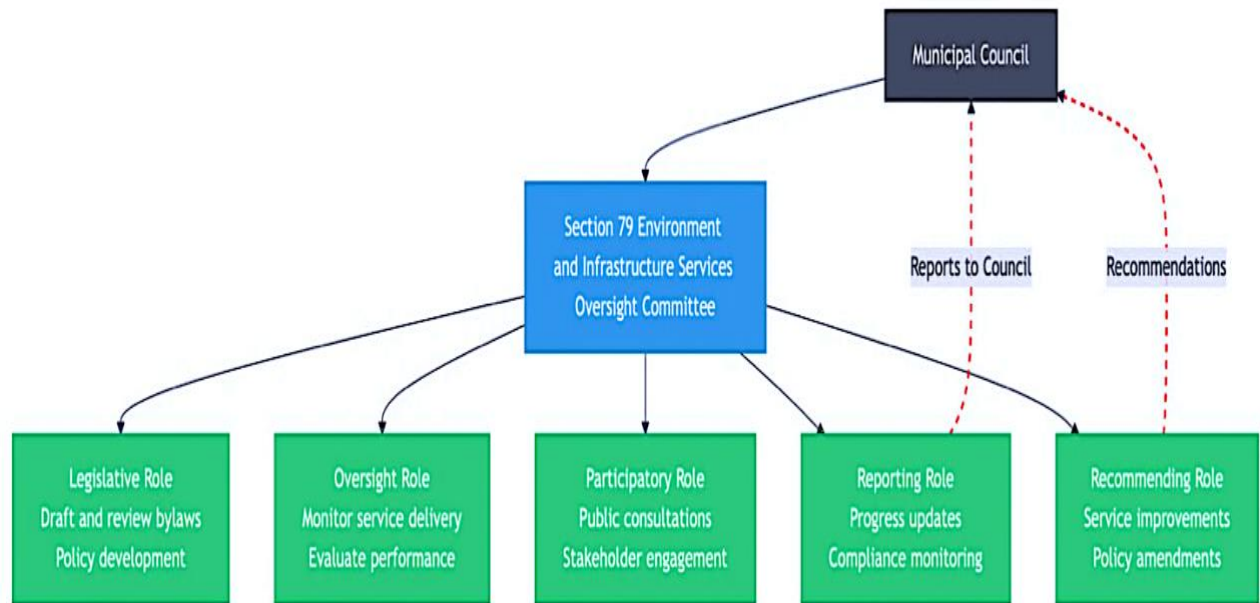
Madue (2013) explains that oversight committees are challenged by their (i) ad hoc nature, (ii) reactive interactions with executives and departments, and (iii) failure to identify issues in reports due to insufficient technical capacity and support in financial reporting and budget reviews. While statutory and regulatory frameworks promote oversight, they do not guarantee that committee oversight will consistently improve project service delivery.

Another prevailing critique within the literature regarding the ineffectiveness of municipal oversight encompasses (i) political interference, (ii) limited capacity, (iii) insufficient resources, and (iv) a contentious political environment, all of which contribute to the failures of oversight (Fourie & Waldt, 2023; Hamza, 2023; Manona, 2015; Van der Waldt, 2015). In the context of coalition instability, politics affects oversight committees.

Turning now to the Section 79 EIS Committee, it exercises oversight over the performance of Johannesburg Water, City Power, Pikitup, and EISD, which together form the EIS portfolio. The committee comprises elected Ward Councillors from various political parties represented within the Council and is presided over by a Chairperson appointed by the Council (Kraai et al., 2017). The EIS committee operates within CoJ's service delivery cluster, which encompasses the housing portfolio. It received 61% of the operating budget and 64% of the capital budget (City of Johannesburg Budget Speech, 2024).

Figure 4 below illustrates the hierarchical oversight structure of the EIS committee, with the Council at the highest level. The solid lines indicate direct authority. Red dotted lines represent the committee's reporting to the Council and its role in providing feedback and recommendations. The committee's main oversight functions are highlighted in green boxes.

Figure 4: Section 79 EIS Oversight Committee



Source: compiled by the researcher

The EIS committee monitors performance and represents the Council (Kraai et al., 2017; Madumo, 2015; Van der Walddt, 2015). Thus, it oversees Pikitup operations, which are crucial in waste management governance. The committee also plays a vital role in balancing service delivery with environmental sustainability. Thus, studying the Section 79 EIS Committee is essential for understanding how the municipality addresses the two frequently conflicting urban issues.

In conclusion, the local government legislative framework is designed to promote good governance. It highlights monitoring and evaluation for accountability through political oversight by Section 79 committees and extensions of the Council's authority.

The transformation of the public sector in democratic South Africa is discussed in the next section.

2.3 New Public Management (NPM) Reforms in South Africa

Existing literature (Barzelay, 2001, 2005; Dunleavy et al., 2006; Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Hood, 1995; Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020) historicises the evolution of NPM; therefore, the study does not explore this aspect. Instead, it engages scholars in clarifying the

concept and focusing on its application in the South African public sector. Scholarly discourse shows that NPM faces definitional challenges from its broad public sector use, resulting in (i) poor dissemination of core principles, (ii) conflicting outcomes, (iii) varied interpretations, and (iv) limited understanding of its impacts due to insufficient comparative data (Barzelay, 2001; Dunleavy et al., 2006; Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Gumede & Dipholo, 2014; Hood, 1995; McLaughlin et al., 2002). Lapuente and Van de Walle (2020, p. 470) define NPM as the “implementation of private management ideas into public services,” intending to transform them into a more efficient and effective form of governance.

The work of Dunleavy et al. (2006) is essential for this research. They describe NPM as the reorganisation of the public sector to reflect the operational characteristics of the private sector. In other words, public administration has evolved from its bureaucratic origins to a performance-based, market-oriented approach to service delivery. Consequently, applying NPM principles, encompassing a market-oriented approach to municipal service delivery, was considered a feasible solution (Cameron, 2009).

Outsourcing, competitive market practices, and decentralisation are among the principles of NPM that are now embedded in municipalities (Munzhedzi, 2021). Competition has caused entities to vie for national funding, necessitating the development of a business case for public services (Batley et al., 2012; Bond, 1998). Scholars agree that contracting essential services in South Africa’s public sector led to corruption, political interference, nepotism, maladministration, poor infrastructure, and weak oversight (Batley et al., 2012; Beall et al., 2000; Hollands, 2007; Mogale & Picard, 2015; Ntliziywana, 2017; Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2011; Woldemariam et al., 2014).

Furthermore, outsourcing service contracts and tenders entrenched private sector participants in service delivery and, over time, facilitated the commercialisation of public services, transforming residents into customers (Naidoo, 2015).

The NPM incentives for performance-based management in South Africa did not enhance efficiency in administration, public services, or developmental objectives (Cameron, 2009).

Critics of NPM incentivisation argue that it has led to manipulated performance metrics, revealing the limited ability to assess performance, concentrating too much on short-term targets, and neglecting long-term developmental goals (Gumede et al., 2019; Gumede & Dipholo, 2014; Mafunisa, 2007; Munzhedzi, 2021).

The CoJ operates under a mixed model combining public and private elements, developed during post-apartheid public sector reform integrating NPM (Cameron, 2009). This shift from bureaucratic management embraces a corporate approach to service delivery, including decentralising authority and accountability (Munzhedzi, 2016, 2021).

The reforms also created Pikitup and other MOEs as part of the CoJ's iGoli 2002 urban neoliberalisation strategy (Samson, 2008). Furthermore, these MOEs were created as utilities, reflecting their financial self-sustaining aim. This signalled the beginning of commodifying basic services (Bond, 2008; Bond & Dugard, 2008) and facilitated the integration of private-sector companies into service delivery through contracts.

Decentralising authority under NPM created Pikitup as an autonomous entity (Cameron, 2009; Gumede et al., 2019; Gumede & Dipholo, 2014; Munzhedzi, 2021). This decentralised authority is managed by a director and an executive team, who report to the Board of Directors. Pikitup accounts to multiple authorities:

- The Council
- Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) and political head of the Environment and Infrastructure Services portfolio
- The Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Services Committee, which is the extension of council authority
- The Environment and Infrastructure Services Department (EISD)
- The Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC), which is another Section 79 committee.

Additionally, external provincial oversight from the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARDE) regarding compliance at landfill sites must also adhere to national legislation and regulations (Godfrey et al., 2019, 2021; Godfrey & Oelofse, 2017a; Oelofse & Godfrey, 2008).

This web of multiple principal-agent relationships unfolds within the CoJ, characterised by highly contested politics, political interference, and hierarchical dynamics that affect the municipality's overall waste management governance (Mathekga & Buccus, 2006; Mokgari & Pwaka, 2018; Pearson, 2022; Reddy, 2016). Nonetheless, the private-public model has not achieved effective and efficient service delivery nor enhanced good governance and accountability (Munzhedzi, 2021).

In summary, NPM's good intentions have not translated into effective governance; instead, they have created layers of authority that paralyse oversight.

2.4 Pikitup

Samson (2008) notes that Pikitup was established in 2001 after the merger of four waste management units from the former Johannesburg municipality, which was part of the iGoli 2002 strategy, which privatised waste management. Pikitup is an independent waste management entity in Johannesburg, servicing households and businesses in the city's seven regions. It employs 4,500 staff and manages 12 depots, 44 garden sites, and four landfills: Robinson Deep, Goudkoppies, Marie Louise, and Ennerdale, each with less than five years of operational lifespan. Due to limited capacity, Pikitup utilises private landfills in Chloorkop and Mooiplats and oversees environmental compliance at closed sites in Kya Sands and Linbro Park.

Pikitup is overseen by a board of Directors appointed by CoJ. The Environment, Infrastructure, and Services Department (EISD) ensures governance under a mayoral committee councillor. Executive management directs the Business Plan to align with the City's GDS 2040 strategy for a cleaner environment and supports the mayor's sustainability priorities.

The 2022-2023 Business Plan outlines key performance areas:

- Integrated waste management, waste prevention and waste minimisation
- Create value from waste - incentives for recycling

- Effective service delivery – including to informal settlements

2.4.1 Legislative and Policy Matters Regarding Pikitup

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment (DFFE) serves as South Africa's main regulatory body for waste management. Pikitup must adhere to various national laws, with the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) being the primary legislative framework for environmental governance. Additionally, the Waste Act (NEMWA) explicitly addresses waste management in South Africa.

The DFFE, through the 2020 National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS), urges municipalities to minimise, reduce, prevent, reuse, and recycle waste in favour of a circular economy model over landfilling, which should be a last resort (DFFE, 2020). This involves integrating waste reclaimers into municipal waste diversion and separation programmes (Samson, 2020b; Schenck et al., 2019).

CoJ waste management must evolve into an integrated system as per the NWMS. The EISD has developed an Integrated Waste Management Plan (IWMP) for Pikitup's implementation of the NWMS. The policy framework aims to ensure effective service delivery and execution of both plans.

2.5 Landfills Represent a Significant Threat to the Environment

Waste management services significantly contribute to environmental degradation, as evidenced by leachate seepage, declining air quality, and soil and groundwater contamination (Vaverková, 2019), as illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Pikitup Landfill Sites Environmental Impact

Impacts of landfills	Environmental impact
Landfill gas	Releases carbon dioxide that degrades air quality

Size of landfill	Leads to habitat loss for wildlife and plants, although the landfill can be rehabilitated
Leachate-filled harmful chemicals leak	Contaminates groundwater, soil and surface water and damages nearby ecosystems

Source: compiled by the researcher

Research shows elevated mercury levels in borehole water from South African landfills, indicating groundwater contamination (Daso et al., 2019). A different study indicates that landfills release carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere, contributing to poorer air quality (Siddiqua et al., 2022). In addition, landfills emit terrible odours from decaying waste, polluting the air (Ibid). Alam, Ahmed, and Howladar (2020) argue that the concentration of metals such as iron, copper, manganese, and lead in soil shows a progressive increase in contamination over time.

Lastly, landfill construction causes habitat loss, as clearing plants and trees harms the relationship between fauna and flora (International Solid Waste Association, 2024). In South Africa, most municipal solid waste (MSW) is disposed of in landfills. This method of waste management contributes significantly to climate change, habitat loss and pollution (Vinti et al., 2021; Vogel et al., 2021).

The environmental impact of landfills is gradual and incremental. It is characterised by the slow accumulation of heavy metals in water and soil, or as Nixon (2011) calls it, a slow violence that occurs out of sight. Therefore, we must recognise that slow violence represents a gradual normalisation of environmental degradation. The Kya Sands landfill site, as discussed below, exemplifies this issue.

2.5.1 The Dilemma of the Kya Sands Landfill Site

Studies show that Pikitup faces significant operational inefficiencies, resource constraints, political neglect, and inadequate infrastructure, which hinder effective landfill and waste management (Adegun, 2016; Ayeleru et al., 2016; Oelofse & Godfrey, 2008; Rasmeni & Madyira, 2019; Schenck et al., 2019; Siddiqua et al., 2022).

The Kya Sands landfill exemplifies a core concept of the slow violence theory regarding issues that remain hidden and often overlooked, only to become a public spectacle when they can no longer be ignored. For example, Gifford (2022) describes the conflict between rival organised waste gangs fighting to control access to landfill sites. Territorial disputes have emerged regarding profitable areas, frequently culminating in fatal encounters among rival factions. Similarly, Khumalo (2022) observes that armed and well-resourced criminal organisations have infiltrated the Pikitup Robinson Deep landfill site, manipulating access to recyclables and asserting territorial claims.

Majadibodu (2024) notes that although the Kya Sands landfill was closed in 2010, it continues to produce leachate and greenhouse gases, which affect air and water quality. The author also claims that the waste gang that has reopened the site burns waste daily, which increases air pollution. The waste gangs impose fees on trucks that dispose of builder's rubble at the landfill. This is part of an illegal business operation where these organised groups act as self-appointed site operators.

Pikitup must achieve financial self-sufficiency, focus on profit, and reduce costs, which deprioritise infrastructure investment and maintenance spending. Several internal and external factors affecting the CoJ have contributed to the Kya Sands landfill site crisis, and the landfill's management is lacking.

2.6 Waste Reclaimers: Effective Separation Outside Formal Processes

The NEMWA is national legislation shifting towards a waste management hierarchy prioritising recycling, recovery, and reintegrating materials into the economy (Strydom, 2018). As such, a circular economy signifies the future of municipal waste management.

Additionally, the 2020 National Waste Management Strategy emphasises the essential contribution of waste reclaimers to assisting municipalities in transitioning from their current practices and systems (Godfrey et al., 2021).

Samson's comprehensive research furthers this argument, showing that the waste reclaimers have effectively diverted and separated waste outside the CoJ's formal waste management structure (Samson, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2015, 2019, 2020a, 2020b).

Godfrey estimates that waste reclaimers have “saved municipalities between R309.2 and R748.8 million in landfill airspace” (Godfrey et al., 2016, p. 1). Despite this success, the waste reclaimers continue to operate on the periphery of the formal sector because there is resistance from the CoJ to integrate the waste reclaimers (Samson, 2020a). In this context, integrating waste reclaimers is essential to the CoJ transition to a circular economy.

In summary, the post-apartheid restructuring of South Africa's public sector aimed to enhance governance but has made limited progress. While reforms targeted accountability and efficiency in service delivery, they faltered at the local government level, where delivery starts.

2.7 Urbanisation, Waste Management and Environmental Threats

The CoJ Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2022-2027 underscores the necessity for improvements in waste management and tackles climate-related environmental challenges. Waste management and environmental issues are given low priority in the IDP as the five-year plan centres on programmes aligned with mayoral priorities during their terms (City of Johannesburg, 2022).

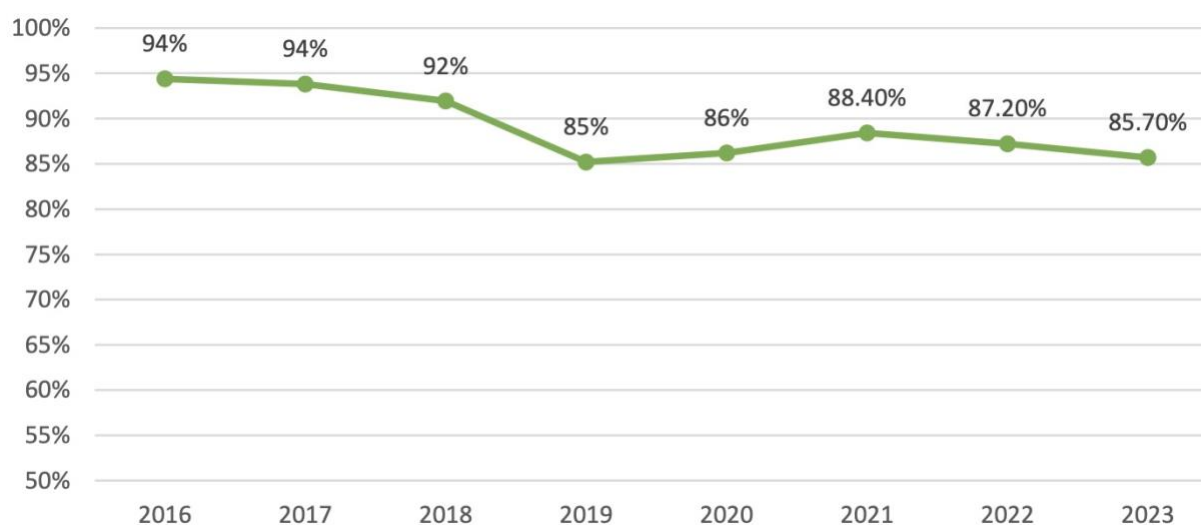
What is the significance of the above? It demonstrates how the CoJ political cycle influences project priorities, resource allocation, and implementation in alignment with the term of office. The preceding approach contradicts the System Act, which clearly states that the IDP’s vision must focus on long-term municipal development (Gunter & Massey, 2020).

The plan recognises unequal access to services. The government has faced challenges with the legacy of apartheid-era planning, including service delivery and infrastructure backlogs resulting from population growth and urban expansion (City of Johannesburg, 2022). As such, the focus is on speeding up service delivery rather than environmental protection. However, the IDP focus is on the mayoral priorities for speeding up service delivery rather than the ecological concerns induced by municipal waste management.

Can the IDP neglect waste management, considering that enhancing service delivery is central to its vision? Not particularly, given the increased demand for waste management services driven by urban expansion. Below, Figure 5 illustrates that the CoJ faces challenges in waste service delivery; while 85.7% of households receive regular waste removal, 14.3% either have restricted access or experience service backlogs (City of Johannesburg, 2024).

Figure 5 shows a significant decline in household access to waste services in the CoJ from 2019 to 2023, remaining at 85% and not returning to the 90% levels of 2016-2018. The CoJ 2023/24 Integrated Annual Report states that access to refuse removal has decreased relative to other essential services. The report also acknowledges the need for improved waste management due to increased waste generation and city growth.

Figure 5: Access to Refuse Removal within the CoJ, 2016-2023



Source: CoJ Integrated Annual Report 2023/24 Financial Year

The CoJ municipality and Pikitup recognise that poor waste management practices, including landfilling, insufficient infrastructure, and limited access to services, have led to increased illegal dumping (City of Johannesburg, 2022; Pikitup, 2024). Turok and Borel-Saladin (2018) found that Johannesburg's urbanisation comprises formal and informal developments, with 30% of residents living in informal settlements. In another study, the

same authors contend that the housing supply cannot meet urban demand (Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2014).

The 2024-25 Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) notes a “housing backlog of 396,532 as of 2021, worsened by 312 informal settlements, hostels, backyard rentals, and inner-city overcrowding” (CoJ, 2024, p.29). Thus, the city’s spatial growth pressures the CoJ to enhance municipal service provision.

Population growth and urbanisation significantly alter housing and consumption patterns, increasing waste generation (International Solid Waste Association, 2024). The municipal solid waste generated per household is also growing. According to the Pikitup 2024/25 Business Plan, the city's growth and waste generation will increase waste from the current “1.7 million tonnages to 2.3 million by 2030” (Pikitup, 2024, p.28). The entity claims that the effect will be compounded by the current underinvestment in waste management, which is not responsive to the growing need for essential services in the CoJ. These factors significantly impact the environment.

However, the budget allocated to Pikitup is relatively small compared to other entities in the EIS portfolio. For instance, Pikitup was allocated R1.1 billion for multi-year capital expenditures, which is significantly less than City Power’s R4.2 billion and Joburg Water’s R4.5 billion (City of Johannesburg Budget Speech, 2024). This constrains infrastructure upgrades aimed at meeting the growing demands of urban areas. Inadequate funding leads to service failures. Furthermore, the ageing landfill infrastructure, inadequate services, and illegal dumping have escalated, deepening environmental degradation.

2.7.1 Environmental Concerns Identified in CoJ Policies

Several CoJ policies recognise environmental issues associated with landfills. For example, the Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) 2040 identifies city-owned landfills as detrimental, producing “vast quantities of carbon dioxide and other toxic gases” (City of Johannesburg, 2011, p.63). Additionally, the GDS notes that the damage extends beyond the environment into public health, particularly for informal settlements where waste management services remain inadequate.

The IDP builds on these concerns by detailing how unsustainable waste management practices have led to environmental pollution, mainly as landfills approach capacity and covering them becomes increasingly challenging (City of Johannesburg, 2022). It also highlights how insufficient waste separation and recycling infrastructure contribute to the significant volume of waste sent to landfills.

As discussed in the introduction, the IDP focuses on visible, politically motivated projects and those that align with the mayoral priorities. This results in a cycle where current waste management systems struggle, leading to a decline in basic service delivery. The Integrated Waste Management Plan (IWMP) has also identified several areas to address: (i) landfill dependency, (ii) environmental impacts, and (iii) waste service efficiency (City of Johannesburg, 2011). It highlights Pikitup's financial constraints, which limit the entity's ability to manage leachate systems, thereby jeopardising effective landfill management.

According to the Climate Action Plan, landfill gas (LFG) generated by decomposing waste, significantly increases greenhouse gas emissions (City of Johannesburg, 2024). The plan aims to capture methane and convert it into energy to reduce the “negative impacts on human and ecosystem health” (City of Johannesburg, 2024, p.23) from MSW. These policies reflect the CoJ's acknowledgement of the environmental impact of waste management. The following section addresses the challenges of waste service delivery.

2.7.2 Challenges in Waste Management Services Delivery

The challenges faced by Pikitup become more evident when examining the broader failures in municipal service delivery. Research indicates that these issues stem from poor governance, lack of by-law enforcement, infrastructure backlog and inadequate maintenance (Kemp & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020; Khale & Worku, 2013; Mamokhere et al., 2022), corruption, skill shortages, financial mismanagement and political interference (Mafunisa, 2007; Manyaka & Sebola, 2012; Masuku & Jili, 2019; Moji et al., 2022; Ntshangase & Msosa, 2022), maladministration and tender corruption (Mlambo & Maserumule, 2023; Munzhedzi, 2016; Reddy & Govender, 2018). Furthermore, the

irregular provision of essential services has ignited significant “service delivery protests” among affected communities across South Africa (Ndevu & Muller, 2017, p. 20).

Insofar as to who is most affected by service delivery failures, Powell (2012) argues that it is people in rural areas, poor communities and informal settlements. This situation continues the spatially unequal service delivery reminiscent of apartheid government policies and practices.

Pieterse (2009, p. 13) points out that South African cities today have “morphed into a neo-apartheid spatiality since both urban sprawl and intra-class divisions have worsened since 1994.” Pikitup's waste management challenges highlight the link to broader municipal service delivery failures (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Masibigiri, 2022). Pikitup asserts “unsustainable and growing needs for basic services” (Pikitup, 2024, p.43), and reduced funding makes it difficult, if not impossible, to provide these services. Consequently, Pikitup cannot meet its service delivery obligations. Studies confirm that in South Africa, waste management suffers from underfunding and poor coordination, leaving municipalities without the infrastructure to manage waste effectively (Godfrey & Oelofse, 2017b; Oelofse & Godfrey, 2008).

Other vital municipal services also demand attention and contribute to the low prioritisation of waste management. For example, Rangwato, Mukonza, and Molepo (2022) point out that a large portion of the budget in municipalities is directed towards housing, electricity, and water provision rather than waste management, reflecting a political priority for immediate needs.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter summarises the establishment of local government following apartheid, emphasising how municipalities facilitate service delivery. The public sector has transformed through the adoption of new public management (NPM) principles, including decentralisation. This decentralisation has resulted in the creation of entities such as Pikitup and has highlighted the importance of efficiency and effectiveness. However, it has not led to improved outcomes in service delivery. The scale and pace of

urbanisation, along with population growth, place significant pressure on the government to provide essential services. The CoJ IDP's failure to prioritise waste management exacerbates this issue. Landfills, as observed in Kya Sands, contradict environmental protection and indicate neglect. Municipal waste management in the CoJ remains underfunded despite its significance for sustainable development.

The following chapter details the methods used in this study.

3 CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is organised into four key sections that collectively establish the research framework. The chapter begins with the research design and qualitative framework, which combines purposive sampling with triangulated data collection methods, including in-depth interviews, document analysis, and field observations. Subsequently, it addresses data analysis approaches, acknowledges study limitations, outlines ethical protocols, and concludes with reflexive considerations of researcher positionality.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Qualitative Research

A qualitative approach best suited the research case study. Weiss (1995) points out that qualitative interviews provide detailed descriptions and integrate multiple perspectives, as participants have diverse observations of the same event. Additionally, a qualitative approach gathers rich and detailed textual data by collecting information through language and examining events within their context and complexity (Weiss, 1995). Furthermore, the study was conducted qualitatively because this approach produces a real-world context for social phenomena and examines perceptions, experiences, and interactions (Lim, 2024). In other words, perceptions regarding political oversight are crucial for uncovering relevant contextual factors.

A case study on the Section 79 oversight committee, which oversees Pikitup, was employed. Yin (2009) argues that a case study helps the researcher gain an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena within the context of one setting.

The qualitative method for this study reveals the dynamics and complexities of political oversight via the committee within the real-world context of immediate service delivery needs and environmental considerations. Furthermore, Lim (2024, p. 15) states that the

case study is suitable for “observational and descriptive analysis,” which offers a profound contextual understanding. This methodology was chosen for the study because the councillors, officials and managers can provide nuanced insights into the committee’s work. For example, the committee addresses the evident regulatory non-compliance issues associated with landfill operations while concurrently tackling persistent waste management service delivery challenges.

3.2.2 Selection of Participants: Purposive sampling

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who provided relevant information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). This method worked for this study because the individuals were knowledgeable about the multi-layered oversight of municipal waste management governance in the CoJ.

The target population comprised senior managers, middle management officials, councillors from the City of Johannesburg metropolitan municipality, and a waste management expert. The fifteen participants listed in Table 4 were chosen for their direct experience with the complex waste governance structure within the CoJ.

Table 4: List of Interviewed Participants

Interviewee category	Number of interviews
Managers	Four (4) Pikitup Managers
Officials	Three (3) Officials from the EISD in the CoJ
Councillors	Seven (7) Councillors from the ANC (2), ActionSA(2), DA (1) EFF(1) and FF Plus (1) serving in the Section 79 EIS Committee
An Expert	One (1) on waste governance in the CoJ

Source: compiled by the researcher

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted to address the research question: *What role does political oversight in the CoJ municipality play in tackling the tensions between waste management service delivery and environmental impact?*

Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted: twelve in person at the participants' offices and three online. Open-ended and semi-structured questions (Appendix A to D) from the interview schedule were used, allowing for flexibility while maintaining a coherent line of questioning (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

According to Lim, (2024) in-depth interviews provide valuable contextual data, enabling the researcher to explore the participants' insights on a specific topic. This method was suitable for the study as it allowed the researcher to ask probing questions to follow up with the participants and collect more detailed information beyond their initial responses. This enabled the researcher to gather diverse views on the complex relationship between service delivery efficiency and environmental issues.

3.3.2 Document Analysis

Relevant documents, such as reports, business plans, policies, and strategies, were analysed to supplement the interviews. Examining documentation facilitated the triangulation of information from diverse sources, thus mitigating researcher bias and enhancing credibility (Bowen, 2009).

3.3.3 Field Observation

Fieldwork was conducted at the Kya Sands landfill, which closed in 2010. This included photographs and notes to assess its current condition. Focusing on this landfill was essential for understanding how (i) waste management facilities and infrastructure

interact with environmental issues and (ii) Pikitup oversees its continuous post-closure care and maintenance and must adhere to regulations.

Observing the landfill closely provided insights into management practices that ensure compliance with environmental regulations following its closure. In this context, observation proved to be an essential tool for the researcher. Lim (2024) notes that observations can expose discrepancies among (i) reported information, (ii) individuals' expressed beliefs and actions, and (iii) the actual conditions present.

3.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data was captured through audio recordings of interviews, supplemented by notes and photographs from the landfill observation.

3.4.1 Data and Thematic Analysis

This research used a qualitative case study approach to coordinate iterative data collection and analysis (Pope et al., 2000). This methodology proved beneficial, helping to refine the questions. After transcribing the interviews, several content readings were conducted to enhance understanding (Bowen, 2009). The qualitative data analysis included coding the participants' responses. The study initially used thematic data analysis to code text segments pertinent to the research question. Furthermore, iterative coding occurred throughout the data analysis, which entailed revisiting the data and generating codes for additional comparison. This aided the study because the themes emerged organically.

Identifying themes alone is not enough; qualitative data analysis becomes effective when connecting and contextualising those themes (Bazeley, 2009). Consequently, the researcher identified themes by combining the insights drawn from the codes that merge into overarching themes. The codes highlighted the main themes emerging from the responses, which was important for unearthing the core meanings and connections in the data.

3.4.2 Limitations

It is crucial to acknowledge the study's limitations. First, the study focused on the impact of Pikitup waste management service delivery on the CoJ's environment. Utilising a case study with a limited data sample, concentrating on a single location, and focusing on one section 79 committee and one municipally-owned entity was insufficient to address the tension between service delivery and the environmental impact of the entire CoJ municipality.

The sample size and geographical limitations limit the generalisability of the findings across various contexts. Due to the limited scope, the perspectives of communities and waste reclaimers were not considered.

Comparative case studies on Joburg Water and City Power could enhance the study by better articulating contextual factors. Both entities operate under the Environment and Infrastructure Services Portfolio within the CoJ.

3.4.3 Ethical Considerations

Before collecting data, the University of Witwatersrand granted ethical clearance (Appendix E) for all the research activities associated with this study. Additionally, the City of Johannesburg (Appendix F) and Pikitup (Appendix G) issued permission letters for the research.

To ensure the protection of participants, an informed consent form was provided to each individual, along with a clear explanation of the study's purpose. The participants signed the consent form to indicate their voluntary agreement to be interviewed and recorded. Furthermore, each participant was assigned a unique letter to ensure anonymity and prevent identification in the study (J. Creswell & Guetterman, 2018).

3.4.4 Positionality and Reflexivity

According to Holmes (2020), positionality refers to the researcher's acknowledgement of their background, beliefs, experiences, and the influence these have on their approach to the study.

As a CoJ employee researching the municipality's waste management system, I recognise the advantages and challenges of my dual role. Working in the Legislative Oversight unit provides operational insights and access to participants. However, this may introduce bias into my perception of oversight mechanisms and systemic issues. My familiarity with the participants, stemming from our interactions in quarterly meetings, could influence their willingness to participate in interviews.

This is why I applied reflexivity regarding how my positionality shapes and has an "influence on and in the research process" (Holmes, 2020, p. 3). Thus, self-reflection was used to address these tensions.

Before the interviews, I distinguished my role as a researcher from that of a fellow CoJ employee of colleagues, emphasising the importance of honest responses over what they thought I wanted to hear. To mitigate potential bias, I (i) documented how my insider status affected my interpretation and (ii) requested external peer feedback on my analysis.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the qualitative methodology and research design employed in the study. The study utilised purposive sampling and involved fifteen (15) participants. The primary data collection method was in-depth semi-structured interviews, which were supplemented by field observations and document analyses. Subsequently, the collected data was subjected to thematic analysis.

The findings and discussions are presented in both chapters four and five, which are outlined below.

4 CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings that examined service delivery and environmental sustainability, focusing on a case study of Johannesburg's Pikitup waste management services (WMS). The research also explored the intersection of political oversight, service delivery, and ecological sustainability within this case study. It investigated the role of the Section 79 oversight committee in addressing the sometimes conflicting objectives and complex tensions between municipal solid waste (MSW) service delivery and its environmental implications.

Additionally, observations made at the Kya Sands landfill site were crucial in developing four thematic areas of this study. Direct field observation substantiated the themes by highlighting the gap between policy and practice (political accountability), varied perceptions among participants (oversight effectiveness), the impact of political instability on oversight consistency (leadership change), and the ongoing challenge of reconciling (service delivery versus sustainability) waste services needs with long-term environmental protection.

As discussed in the methodology, the study had 15 participants: (i) senior managers from Pikitup, (ii) senior officials from the Environmental Infrastructure and Services Directorate (EISD), (iii) municipal councillors who are members of the Section 79 Oversight Committee, and (iv) an expert in municipal waste management.

Two of the four interconnected themes (the other two being discussed in Chapter Five) are examined here, and they are: (i) political accountability within waste governance frameworks in the CoJ; (ii) the differing perspectives between CoJ officials and Pikitup managers versus councillors regarding the effectiveness of political oversight.

The tension between service delivery imperatives and environmental sustainability must be understood in the context of (i) the constantly evolving political landscape of the CoJ and (ii) the ongoing protests for essential services.

4.2 Political Accountability within the Waste Governance Framework in CoJ

This theme examines the waste governance framework in the CoJ, highlighting political accountability layers that cause inefficiencies and emphasise immediate actions. It also discusses how they impact oversight by the Section 79 EIS committee in bridging service delivery and environmental goals.

4.2.1 Being Accountable To Multiple Authorities Results In An Overload.

Most participants, particularly officials and councillors, believed that overlaps in waste governance obstructed Pikitup's effectiveness in waste management. The following section discusses these perspectives.

4.2.1.1 The Problem of Too Many Bosses

The literature review indicates that decentralisation establishes multiple layers of accountability, leading to paralysis due to excessive governance. This has led to a complicated accountability structure across municipal entities' oversight (Hamza, 2023; Kraai et al., 2017). Specifically, Pikitup functions under the scrutiny of various accountability frameworks that intersect political and administrative oversight, thereby affecting operational efficiency.

The responsibility for accountability and oversight of Pikitup involves the MMC for Environment and Infrastructure Services portfolio, the committee, the department (EISD), the Council, the Board of Directors and external oversight regarding compliance with provincial and national regulations.

A councillor remarked, "Let's be honest, there are far too many reporting lines demanding answers on different matters; it can be confusing. Even I would be confused" (Councillor D, 1/11/2024). The councillor asserted that Pikitup is accountable to the Section 79 Committee and other authorities within the provincial and national environmental regulatory framework.

The complex waste governance structure, while serving essential functions, affects the EISD oversight on Pikitup, one official explained:

... the entity reports to several authorities in the city, and not us [EISD] alone, meaning it also answers to others regarding accountability. Now, they have run their own processes, do their thing and do not report them to us, so we, as the EISD, can only ask for updates... (EISD Official A, 11/09/2024).

Another official believes that having several reporting lines necessitates various approvals and longer consultations, which in turn causes delays in decision-making. The official explained:

...So, as the department, we identify a project that should be, but at the mayoral level, they will call Pikitup to explain why so much money is needed to implement it. Sometimes, it is deliberated at the Council. Depending on what is a priority for the mayor or Council, the project gets pushed aside for important things... (EISD Official B, 09/09/2024)

The project mentioned here pertains to Alternative Waste Treatment Technologies (AWTTs), which officials indicated the EISD had urged the CoJ to adopt and implement for nearly a decade. Officials perceived a lack of political prioritisation, delayed decision-making, and infrastructure investments as arising from an overload of authority. They strongly advocated for Pikitup to report exclusively to the EISD, which should hold the entity accountable for oversight and reporting.

Two of the seven councillors believe the Section 79 committee's inability to enforce accountability weakened its oversight. For example, several councillors noted that the committee could not directly engage with Pikitup's Board of Directors or attend their appointment process, undermining accountability and oversight despite the Board being an oversight authority over Pikitup.

In this sense, the Board of Directors is an additional layer of accountability and oversight. According to a long-serving councillor, Pikitup is constrained by reporting structures with "too many bosses. Who are the real bosses? The Board or the Council?" (Councillor A, 4/11/2024). The Councillor expressed concerns about how the Board added

responsibilities to Pikitup beyond the CoJ reporting structure. Crucial to this research is their belief that the board is not directly accountable to the Section 79 Committee.

One councillor's observation reinforces this view:

...What is the function of the Board? Who do they account to? They seriously do not account to councillors in our role as oversight [i.e. the Section 79 Committee], so who do they account to?... (Councillor B, 28/10/2024).

According to one long-serving councillor, the "Boards in this portfolio are responsible for managing the most fundamental service entities in the city, yet we can't meet with them, or say they must come to our quarterly meeting to account" (Councillor C, 28/10/2024). In this context, the Section 79 committee's oversight does not include the Board of Directors, which limits its ability to address political interference and the growing presence of political appointees.

The study found that separating EISD oversight from day-to-day implementation or strategic supervision has been detrimental to oversight. Mokgari and Pwaka (2018) support this perspective, asserting that the principal-agent relationship negatively impacts the efficacy of oversight in the CoJ, as it functions in a politically contested environment.

4.2.1.2 Overlapping Mandates and Competing Priorities

A critical issue emerged across various groups: the numerous, fragmented layers of institutional oversight on Pikitup impact accountability. Crucially, the complex governance situation blurs accountability lines even when the goal is to align all these oversight reporting lines with broader municipal objectives. For example, the Section 79 committee focuses on monitoring service delivery performance.

Beyond operational efficiency, the EISD monitors compliance with environmental regulations and considers the long-term environmental impact of waste management practices.

The IWMS approach to long-term environmental sustainability and systematic change is as vital as improving waste service delivery, which is still carried out in the traditional way of collecting and disposing of waste in landfill sites. However, according to Pikitup officials, the boundaries between political (the S79 EIS committee) and operational (EISD) oversight are easily blurred because of the overlap in the dual oversight of service delivery.

For Pikitup, this creates a dilemma regarding which directive on service delivery and which oversight authority to prioritise first “since both are critical operational issues directly affecting performance” on waste management services (Pikitup Manager B, 14/08/2024). These blurred lines underpin the widely-held belief among the groups that different directives lead to decision-making paralysis.

As indicated in Table 5 below, the misalignment of priorities hampers Pikitup’s ability to adapt and modernise its operations, effectively provide services, and mitigate the environmental impact of its landfill sites.

Table 5: Divergent Policy Priorities

Name	Policy	Priority no 1
Pikitup	2024-25 Business Plan	Integrated Waste Management approach that requires new infrastructure
CoJ	Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan 2024/25	Financial Sustainability
CoJ	Strategy 2040	Improve quality of life and development-driven resilience for all

Source: compiled by the researcher

The table highlights Pikitup’s focus on integrated waste practices that require significant capital for infrastructure development, while the CoJ’s priorities are elsewhere.

Different approaches create challenges. Pikitup emphasises infrastructure and operational efficiency, whereas the IDP integrates waste management with other

developmental services and objectives. This creates a disconnect between strategic vision and operational realities, especially regarding resource constraints, infrastructure renewal, and capacity. The SDBIP's budget constraints restrict the execution of vital projects to enhance waste management services.

A senior manager from Pikitup (Manager B, 14/08/2024) emphasised that the entity has proposed mega infrastructure projects, such as alternative waste treatment technologies, to improve operations and services for many years. However, political leadership has responded by first addressing the backlog on service delivery post-apartheid (Katumba & Everatt, 2021; Sithole & Mathonsi, 2015). The iGoli 2002's corporatisation of waste management impeded capital projects and curtailed infrastructure investment due to a focus on cost containment (Samson, 2008). Currently, limited budget allocations restrict operational capacity and the ability to pursue large infrastructure projects (Mapani et al., 2022; Nyika et al., 2020).

Given the above constraints, Pikitup is trapped in conventional waste management methods that impede sustainable systems and service delivery. This situation largely stems from the municipality's political leadership, which has embraced a conservative stance on waste management investment while favouring other social needs instead.

4.2.1.3 Repetitive Reporting

Provincial oversight further complicates reporting. According to EISD officials, the EISD and Pikitup conduct internal landfill audits and report them to GDARDE. As part of their oversight, the EISD verifies the accuracy of Pikitup's audits, which often do not align with the EISD's report.

One official believed "there was too much repeated reporting of the same thing" (EISD official A, 11/10/2024). The official believed reporting could be streamlined. Since EISD oversees landfill environmental monitoring, the quarterly report should suffice instead of multiple reports on the same issue.

As both the EISD and Pikitup fall under the authority of the CoJ, external environmental compliance from provincial oversight adds another layer to an already complex

governance structure. Officials expressed that while a provincial perspective is valuable, it represents an oversight that typifies unnecessary external regulatory monitoring, given the existence of two internal oversight mechanisms – the EISD and the Section 79 Committee.

4.2.2 Service Delivery Priorities Surpass Environmental Protection

Exploring the political perceptions of waste management services (WMS) is critical for this research. This section addresses the low prioritisation of WMS and the focus on immediate needs over long-term sustainability.

4.2.2.1 CoJ: Where Waste Management Must Wait Its Turn

Across the different groups, there was a recognition and understanding that WMS is a basic need. They were also acutely aware that at the political leadership level of the CoJ, insufficient attention was paid to it because the focus was on other priorities. As one manager explained:

...Politicians do not see us [Pikitup] as important to the city as City Power and Joburg Water; we are, ‘by the way,’ in their eyes. Our services are not taken seriously unless there is a strike, waste is piling up, and politicians start making noise about cleaning up. For years, we have proposed and presented a few mega projects [integrated waste management system] to take the pressure off landfill sites; till today, we have not received funding for them. What does that tell you? They do not see it as important to the city, which affects our operations... (Pikitup Manager B, 14/08/2024)

Councillors in the Section 79 Committee concurred with the Pikitup managers’ view that pressing and more urgent needs overshadow waste management in the CoJ because of “the way the city is run; it runs on a system of triage. So, whatever happens to be the most important or the most pressing issue at the time, that will take precedence” (Councillor A, 28/10/2024).

An analysis of the CoJ Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2022-2027 highlights the seven priorities guiding the city's service delivery programmes for the next five years, where waste management services are integrated as part of the overall essential service provision.

In the long-term Growth Development Strategy (GDS) 2040, the CoJ's focus and interventions on essential services will see R20 billion spent on "investment on fixing, replacing, and upgrading roads, bridges, water right provision and management of pipes, wastewater plants, and power grid" (CoJ, 2011, p. 65). However, WMS is not mentioned in the capital investment for service delivery. Instead, the GDS 2040 is development-driven, and the top outcome is improving the quality of life.

The 2024/25 Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan outlines eleven (11) priorities for achieving this goal, with financial sustainability and energy mix at the top (CoJ, 2024). However, waste management services are lower on the municipality's priority list in terms of resource allocation than other services.

According to the waste management expert interviewed for this research, the neoliberalisation of waste management services as part of iGoli 2002 impacted WMS prioritisation because the emphasis was on (i) cost recovery and financial sustainability, (ii) servicing areas that could pay, (iii) restructured labour, and (iv) reduced investment in infrastructure and budget allocation. Ultimately, once seen as a public good, WMS became commodified and was no longer regarded as an essential priority service.

One Pikitup manager believed that there is an acceptance that the CoJ leadership has consistently prioritised what they regarded as "pressure point urgent needs while waste management takes a back seat" (Pikitup official A, 13/08/2024). Additionally, the CoJ tends to respond to protests about no electricity and water quicker than when waste is not collected, a councillor explained:

... if people's taps are dry, they scream; if they do not have electricity, they scream. If they are without water for a week, then they will protest in the street. But if the waste is lying in the streets for a week, they are sort of accepting... (Councillor G, 18/11/2024).

Based on the above views, the study shows that the CoJ's focus on immediate basic services achieves visible, quick results. In contrast, waste management requires long-term planning and investment, which does not immediately benefit public perception.

4.2.2.2 Waste Management Services is a Low Priority

The experiences of Ward councillors serving on the Section 79 committee are fundamental to assessing the tension between waste service delivery and environmental sustainability. Based on their wards, councillors ranked municipal services by priority, offering an objective view of waste management's priority relative to other services. Figure 6 illustrates that councillors consider access to water and electricity to be the primary concern, while waste management, though essential, is seen as a secondary issue, with none of the respondents ranking it highly.

Figure 6: Councillors' Ranking of Municipal Services by Wards' Needs



Source: compiled by the researcher

However, it should be noted that the ranking of water prioritisation may have been influenced by the fact that several suburbs in various regions of CoJ faced persistent water supply problems when the interviews were conducted. Committee members

prioritised issues pertinent to their constituencies over WMS challenges such as landfill non-compliance.

For some councillors, the negative impacts of landfills and non-compliance intersect.

For instance, two councillors whose wards are situated near landfill sites face pressing issues: the unpleasant odour, the uncontrollable fire in one landfill, the pollution from the fumes, and the informal settlements adjacent to the landfills.

In other words, two councillors perceive the dynamic between service delivery and environmental impact in two ways: the consequences of having a landfill site within or near their ward and an understanding of the broader issue facing the city. The proximity of the landfill to the two wards significantly influenced the councillors' prioritisation of urgent intervention, as residents mainly contacted them as their elected local representatives. In contrast, environmental concerns stemming from landfills were less significant to other councillors, as their constituents were not directly impacted.

As the Section 79 Committee, councillors collectively oversee landfills, such as the October 2024 Kya Sands visit, which revealed significant and systematic challenges in maintaining the cycle of non-compliance. The degree to which waste management is perceived as of medium importance means it receives less political investment and prioritisation. The attention becomes more focused when waste services like landfills impact communities, especially when the effects are immediate.

This section has demonstrated that service delivery, waste management, and responses to environmental degradation are influenced by the political context in which they operate. In the CoJ, waste management services and Pikitup are overwhelmed by immediate needs, rendering oversight on long-term environmental considerations ineffective.

4.3 Different Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Oversight

This theme examines participants' views on the effectiveness of the Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Services (EIS) Committee's political oversight. Some councillors found it effective, while others felt it lacked focus on waste management due

to time constraints. It also addresses the perspectives of Pikitup managers and EISD officials. The chapter highlights the Kya Sands landfill crisis to illustrate the committee's challenges. It uses successful waste reclaimers' separation methods as a guide that could help the CoJ to transition its current linear waste management practices to a circular economy model.

4.3.1 Varying Views of Councillors on Committee Oversight

In practice, the councillors believed that the committee was fulfilling its responsibilities. However, whether this resulted in effective oversight remains debatable, revealing contrasting views. According to two councillors, the committee effectively fulfilled its oversight responsibilities regarding Pikitup and EISD's performance through regular meetings.

One councillor stated, "We meet, discuss Pikitup's performance, ask why targets are not met, and demand updates at the next meeting" (Councillor B, 24/10/2024). The councillor regarded this as effective oversight. The other councillor highlighted public participation to highlight the success of the Section 79 EIS committee, stating that it is "doing very well" compared to the Petitions Committee on which he previously served (Councillor A, 4/11/2024). This remark referred to the EIS committee's 2023 public participation in two by-laws unrelated to waste management services.

In contrast, three councillors were convinced that the committee's oversight was ineffective due to political decisions made at the CoJ leadership level.

The first councillor expressed frustration over the limited four hours to discuss extensive reports from three entities and the department. According to the councillor, "If we were doing our job properly as oversight, quarterly reports would be a three or four day meeting where each entity is given a day to thoroughly interrogate the reported performance" (Councillor C, 28/10/2024). This indicates that brief committee meetings hinder effective political oversight.

The second councillor linked ineffective oversight to environmental issues and service delivery, emphasising that "real-time pressing matters take precedence in meetings,

while climate and environmental concerns are bottom-tier issues” (Councillor D, 1/11/2024).

Furthermore, the councillor also pointed out that “we have struggled to win over fellow politicians in the Council to fund” long-term sustainable waste management strategies (Councillor D, 1/11/2024). The oversight was perceived as ineffective because the committee had not persuaded the CoJ to invest more in essential Pikitup infrastructure to uphold environmental standards and ensure regulatory compliance in landfill operations.

A third councillor believed, "If you cannot understand the financial statement, you cannot monitor how the money has been spent or misallocated” (Councillor G, 18/11/2024). This was a critical argument as the councillor emphasised that the committee struggles to monitor financial performance due to its limited understanding of financial reporting, making oversight ineffective.

For the councillor, financial oversight influences the committee's overall performance and oversight, as effective service delivery is unachievable without capital; every facet of the municipality requires funding.

The remaining two councillors believed that oversight was effective in some areas but ineffective in others. According to one councillor, physical oversight visits are essential for verifying the accuracy of the information presented to the oversight committee in quarterly reports and assessing whether it reflects "the reality on the ground" (Councillor E, 18/11/2024). This physical examination of facilities and ongoing and completed projects and infrastructure highlights the committee’s commitment to ensuring service delivery. This argument is relevant because Pikitup is part of the CoJ portfolio, receiving over 60% of the municipal budget, as mentioned in the sub-section on Section 79 committees.

The councillor also believed that the committee’s oversight was limited, as it can only make recommendations and could not enforce accountability on Pikitup. The frustrated councillor explained that “our reports can only go so far; we recommend, and when there is no action, we can only repeat what we have already said” (Councillor E, 18/11/2024).

This suggests that the committee can only follow up on its recommendations without any authority to impose penalties.

The last councillor noted that committee oversight functions effectively when addressing urgent issues that capture the attention of the entire Council. For example, during the research interviews, the councillor referred to the challenges posed by water interruptions and supply issues, underscored by resident protests. The councillor explained that “what is urgent at the time gets attention from the committee and the responsible entity” (Councillor F, 6/11/2024).

However, the councillor acknowledged that the committee has significantly failed in its responsibilities regarding the oversight of landfill sites. It has not been conducting site visits to assess the condition of the facilities.

For the councillor, the committee oversees a portfolio that includes infrastructure, and as such, “we cannot sit in meetings, look at presentations, and be told about infrastructure” (Councillor F, 6/11/2024). This emphasises the need for councillors to inspect infrastructure and facilities in person.

It is noteworthy that the four longest-serving councillors on the committee, despite their differing views on the effectiveness of oversight, all expressed concerns regarding Pikitup's decline over the past five years. They believe this has significantly impacted service delivery and results from the municipality's inadequate allocation of resources for waste management.

In conclusion, this sub-section has demonstrated that councillors serving on the Section 79 EIS committee held varying perspectives on the effectiveness of oversight. The committee's oversight failures exacerbate environmental degradation and limit the CoJ's ability to respond effectively.

The following section examines the views of Pikitup managers and EISD officials regarding the oversight by Section 79 EIS Committee.

4.3.2 Knowledge Asymmetry Affects Oversight: Perspectives of Officials and Managers

This research demonstrates that Pikitup and EISD are accountable to the Section 79 EIS committee that oversees their performance. Although representatives from both organisations held differing opinions, their perspectives regarding the committee's oversight were similar. A common perspective among Pikitup managers and EISD officials was that the primary knowledge gap stems from the technical complexity of the EIS portfolio, leading to a committee that lacks the necessary expertise to manage it effectively.

An EISD official expressed concerns about the limitations of committee oversight, which is primarily conducted when “they meet only four times a year, and sometimes they don’t sit because of the changing political chairs at the mayor’s office” (EISD Official B 09/09/2024).

According to the official, the periodic meetings exacerbate the asymmetry that already exists, where officials possess extensive knowledge of the daily operations of municipal waste management, in contrast to councillors, who address this issue infrequently.

The official also considered the committee's makeup of politicians as a disadvantage that compounds the gap in technical knowledge and explained that “politicians are always politicking, which affects long-term planning even on serious matters in council and in meetings” (EISD Official B, 09/09/2024). This indicated that even in oversight of waste management, the councillors allowed politics to interfere.

Another official explained how this knowledge asymmetry leads to reporting challenges, stating that “when you add water to strong tea or dilute juice, you lose the flavour because it becomes something else” (EISD Official A, 9/09/2024). The implication is that this creates an information gap, as simplifying complex technical details for reports to the committee dilutes critical nuances. The official cited technologies for alternative waste treatment, stressing the challenges associated with simplification of operations. This hinders the committee's monitoring efforts.

A Pikitup manager stated that politicians do not comprehend the “entire value chain of waste management,” leading to ineffective political oversight (Pikitup Manager C, 14/08/2024). The manager stressed that politicians do not understand the connections between household waste production and its subsequent collection, transportation, separation, recycling, conversion into energy, and final disposal.

Without comprehending the value chain, the committee's oversight will “always focus on allocating the budget to one area, thereby neglecting to consider the holistic view of the entire chain (Pikitup Manager C, 14/08/2024). The implication is that this narrow approach fails in one aspect, affecting the whole waste management system and ultimately leading to service delivery shortcomings.

A different manager at Pikitup believed that insufficient oversight results from politicians' prevailing perception that waste management is an uncomplicated task that anyone can handle. The manager elaborated, “These politicians fail to understand that waste management services involve more than just waste collection and disposal” (Pikitup Manager A, 13/08/2024).

The knowledge gap results in the perception that waste management services are simple, which makes the investment required for operations and infrastructure less urgent or important.

The manager emphasised his point by highlighting the discrepancies between the resources allocated to Pikitup and the pace of urban growth, which leads to an increase in waste generation within the municipality. The entity lacks essential construction and earth-moving equipment, commonly known as yellow plant machinery, required for effective landfill management.

The perspectives of the officials and managers are not absolute facts, as the political oversight of the Section 79 EIS Committee can be compromised without accurate information.

Firstly, the EISD and Pikitup possess institutional information, giving these organisations a significant advantage. As knowledge and power are interconnected, the two are established as gatekeepers of what the committee is allowed to read. Secondly, the

committee relies on reports from the organisations it monitors, highlighting how this compromises its ability to provide independent oversight. Thirdly, the committee meets only quarterly to discuss waste management and other entities within the EIS portfolio. This infrequency contributes to information asymmetry compared to EISD and Pikitup, who have daily access to operational details. As a result, oversight becomes ineffective due to a lack of contextual information about the origins of current waste management challenges.

The crucial point is that the committee's oversight, while affected by the knowledge gap with Pikitup and EISD, is also undermined by how and what information is reported, particularly when it is selectively shared. The limited capacity and resource constraints compound the above issue and reinforce this knowledge imbalance, as the CoJ does not provide specialists or technical experts to the Section 79 committees.

This sub-section examines the views of councillors, EISD officials, and Pikitup managers, highlighting the internal and external factors affecting the Section 79 EIS committee's oversight failures.

It reveals the challenges faced by the internal committee that affect its oversight and the impact of the technical-political knowledge gap, which must not be overlooked as it hinders effective oversight. Furthermore, it is vital to acknowledge that information may be distorted when overseers depend on the inputs provided by those they supervise.

The following sub-section discusses the ineffectiveness of oversight in landfill site management.

4.3.3 Evidence of Ineffective Oversight: The Kya Sands Landfill Revisited

It is important to note that, during the research, the councillors did not associate the effectiveness of their oversight with environmental compliance, even after the committee visited the Kya Sands landfill site.

Five of the seven councillors showed empathy towards Pikitup. They recognised that insufficient financial support and CoJ's laid-back enforcement of by-laws were the

primary reasons for the landfill site's condition. Councillors who participated in the committee's recent oversight visit to the landfill site shared their views.

One explained how the convergence of social challenges faced by residents of the informal settlement indirectly contributes to the condition of the Kya Sands landfill site. Moreover, the perception of inadequate committee oversight regarding the Kya Sands landfill often neglects other important issues that must be addressed and fall under the Human Settlements and Social Development departments.

One councillor found this frustrating and explained that:

... We cannot just come as the committee and recommend that the informal settlement be destroyed because it is near the landfill site, but the city will be sued because now we are dealing with human rights issues... (Councillor A, 28/10/2024)

The image below illustrates the Kya Sands informal settlement mentioned in the preceding comment. During the fieldwork, the researcher observed that the settlement encroached upon the landfill site, with several pathways providing access. Pikitup managers noted that the perimeter fence was regularly replaced but was soon stolen.

Figure 7: Kya Sands Informal Settlement



Source: image by the researcher

Another councillor expressed empathy for individuals reclaiming materials and others who visit the landfill site to collect recyclables and sell them for income. He believed that:

... The city has failed our people. Are we surprised when they pick and sell waste from the site to buy food? I am not talking about organised gangs; I am talking about people from informal settlements who do not harm anyone. They are simply trying to make a living... (Councillor G, 18/10/2024).

The image presented below corroborated the councillor's views. During the research, two women were observed salvaging bricks from the builders' rubble and adding them to the existing pile.

Figure 8: Salvaged Bricks Stacked onto a Pallet for Sale



Source: image by the researcher

Many councillors overlooked the committee's political oversight regarding Pikitup's compliance with environmental regulations, prioritising urgent community needs instead. In this instance, they firmly believed that external groups' access to Pikitup's landfills could not be resolved without addressing the interconnected social issues. Notably, the committee failed to ensure that the comprehensive examination of the fundamental problems at landfill sites was highlighted rather than focusing solely on the Kya Sands incident.

This reflects a lapse in political oversight in addressing environmental damage. The councillors' primary viewpoint aligns with the findings presented in the first theme, emphasising the low prioritisation and neglect that political leaders afford to waste management services despite their ongoing and evident environmental impacts.

However, some councillors acknowledged that the committee could enhance its oversight by implementing improvements, particularly in its monitoring of the implementation of its recommendations, the necessary corrective actions, and the enforcement of environmental standards.

During the field observation, the researcher observed trucks unloading rubble at the closed landfill despite the presence of JMP vehicles nearby, as seen in Figure 9 below. The researcher wore a face mask because of the smell of the decomposing materials.

The two images clearly illustrate that the landfill site was still being used unofficially despite being officially closed. Additional evidence included (i) the absence of a perimeter fence or enclosure around the landfill, (ii) a lack of regular care and maintenance for the site, and (iii) unrestricted access for people and trucks entering and exiting the landfill to dispose of or salvage bricks and recyclables.

Figure 9: Builder's Rubble Disposal at Kya Sands Landfill Site



Source: image by the researcher

Figure 10: Trucks on the Landfill Site



Source: image by the researcher

In this regard, scholars emphasise that the CoJ is faced with waste management challenges that require significant resources, investment, and enhanced infrastructure to cope with increasing waste volumes (Adeleke et al., 2022; Ayeleru et al., 2016; Dlamini & Simatele, 2016; Godfrey & Scott, 2011; Mishi et al., 2022; Rasmeni & Madyira, 2019). The challenges at Pikitup's landfill and related environmental concerns are interconnected.

The following section examines how current linear waste management practices can shift towards a sustainable circular economy that incorporates waste reclaimers.

4.3.4 Waste Reclaimers Can Drive the Shift to a Circular Economy

The CoJ tends to formulate ideological policies rather than engage in meaningful processes to create policies that benefit the municipality and its residents. The expert states that this highlights the CoJ's inadequate understanding of both the contributions made by reclaimers and the actual operations of waste management and disposal (Expert, 25/10/2024). Consequently, the CoJ currently lacks realistic prospects for developing a more environmentally friendly approach to landfill management.

Moreover, the circular economy is not a policy of the CoJ but a contemporary narrative within discussions on waste management and broader sustainable resource management. Rather, what has occurred is that since the Polokwane Declaration and the 2011 National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS), "municipalities, including Johannesburg, have all explicitly committed to improving recycling and resource extraction from waste streams" (Expert, 25/10/2024).

Despite the explicit provisions in the NWMS for incorporating waste reclaimers into municipal waste management, Pikitup has not succeeded in implementing these measures. As shown in the literature review section, reclaimers play a crucial role in waste management within the CoJ and have saved municipalities millions of rand nationwide. Without their efforts in collecting recyclables and diverting waste, landfills would fill up more quickly, leading to a crisis.

The Pikitup waste separation and sorting initiative, referred to as Separation at Source (S@S), has failed. This is a fact that both Pikitup managers and EISD officials admitted. They also acknowledged that waste reclaimers are essential in diverting waste away from landfills.

Two additional crucial admissions were also made: (i) that Pikitup and waste pickers have an informal relationship, and (ii) that the National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS) mandates the integration of waste pickers, yet the entity has not done so as required. A councillor stated that the S@S failed because the CoJ leadership did not prioritise waste management. The emphasis was that the initiative could only succeed when "funding that covers all the resources necessary to make S@S effective is ring-fenced" (Councillor G, 18/11/2024).

Another councillor also acknowledged the significance of waste reclaimers in the S@S programmes. One councillor explained that they “play a huge role and have also succeeded where our Pikitup S@S has failed” (Councillor B, 24/10/2024).

The expert stated that Pikitup's waste separation initiative had failed because there has been “no attempt by the utility to develop comprehensive, effective, evidence-based” policies and programs for adoption (Expert, 25/09/2024). The expert highlighted in their research the evidence found that the pilot project conducted by the African Reclaimers’ Organisation (ARO) in Brixton and Auckland Park had successfully achieved effective separation outside the source system. In contrast to Pikitup, which relied on private companies or cooperatives, these private entities typically collected only the separated bags of recyclables.

According to Councillors and officials, the main obstacle to integration stems from the nationality and undocumented status of some of the reclaimers. Although all four Pikitup managers considered the integration of waste reclaimers essential, as stipulated in the NWMS, the challenges include (i) the necessary administrative process required to register them and the subsequent costs, and (ii) the fear of political ramifications of providing jobs to foreign nationals instead of South Africans.

Concerns about political ramifications are valid. For example, one councillor stated, “We know that most waste pickers come from Lesotho. They don’t mind the little money, which is why today, throughout Joburg, waste pickers are from other countries” (Councillor F, 06/11/2024).

The experts, officials, and managers concurred that a paradigmatic shift was essential for the municipality to transition effectively to a circular economy. According to one expert, this transition can only occur if the CoJ leverages the knowledge, experience, and insights of reclaimers to establish effective Separation at Source (S@S) systems within the city, as “they are the only ones who know how to do it” (Expert, 25/09/2024). This means that reclaimers possess the necessary expertise to guide Pikitup in transforming CoJ waste management into a circular economy.

However, the prevailing perspective among EISD officials and Pikitup managers was that the political instability and dynamics within the CoJ make such a transformation

impossible. For experts, given the current situation, Pikitup cannot develop an effective and realistic strategy to address the environmental impacts of landfills without genuinely engaging the thousands of reclaimers operating on its sites.

It is clear from this sub-section that the effectiveness of the Section 79 EIS committee's political oversight, revealing constraints due to (i) limited time preventing proper focus on waste management, including physical inspection of landfill sites, (ii) a highly technical portfolio where the committee addresses various sector issues, (iii) the knowledge gap between the committee and those they oversee puts them at an information disadvantage, and (iv) insufficient authority to enforce its recommendations.

The Kya Sands landfill site exemplifies the culmination of these failures. Moreover, this situation highlights the CoJ leadership's broader neglect of the waste management system. Furthermore, the CoJ's efforts to implement waste separation initiatives have faced challenges owing to its top-down approach, which presumes that collaborations spearheaded by the private sector are effective. Ultimately, a key aspect related to landfills is that reclaimers' effective waste separation and sorting can transform current practices into a circular economy driven by these reclaimers.

The consequences of oversight failures extend beyond the Section 79 EIS Committee; the following theme explores the political context in which the committee operates.

5 CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter extends the analysis of the findings and the discussion initiated in the preceding chapter. Section 5.1 examines how frequent leadership changes affect the City of Johannesburg (CoJ), addressing issues of political instability, the impact of waste management, and dynamics within the oversight committee. Section 5.2 explores the tension between service delivery needs and environmental sustainability from multiple stakeholder perspectives.

5.1 Impacts of Frequent Leadership Changes in the CoJ

This theme takes us squarely into the domain of politics and explores the interplay between the environment, political framework and service delivery. It illustrates why the environment is inherently political, given the political dynamics within the CoJ. The context in which the Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Services Committee operates demonstrates the significant influence of political factors.

Since the committee is an extension of the Council's legislative functions, it acts on its behalf to oversee activities and provide reports accordingly. This structure leaves the committee susceptible to direct influence from political instability within the Council. Such a situation undermines the committee's oversight, ultimately impacting service delivery and waste governance.

5.1.1 Resilience and Vulnerabilities to Political Instability

Local government must effectively and efficiently provide sustainable services. However, political interests and a short-sighted approach to governance in the CoJ make this impossible. The ongoing political instability in the Council due to frequent leadership changes and coalitions weakens the oversight committees and makes the provision of basic services a contested political space.

5.1.1.1 Resilient Bureaucratic Framework

According to some committee members and Pikitup managers, the abovementioned point should not impede municipal operations and functionality, as institutional structures have demonstrated resilience. Furthermore, the bureaucratic frameworks remain intact and can withstand political instability, as the work is carried out by "public servants rather than politicians" (Pikitup Manager D, 3/09/2024). In this sense, they argued that the bureaucratic structure within the CoJ could withstand the realignment of political leadership.

This perspective is particularly significant because Cameron (2009) has shown that the NPM reforms enacted in the post-apartheid era fostered a strong middle management. This enables the administration to maintain operations and supervise the municipality during leadership transitions and periods of unstable coalition government.

A member of the Section 79 EIS committee, who has served on the Council for a long time, explained that:

... For the city's service delivery component, the mandates never change. There is a GDS2040 that sets out roles and responsibilities, and whoever is the leader, the focus is the same, as much as they might change some words and language. The municipality's role is clearly outlined as delivering services to those communities. So, nothing much has changed regarding the actual execution of services... (Councillor A, 4/11/2024).

A Pikitup manager believed that, as the entity is operational by design, leadership changes do not significantly impact its daily operations. He also recognised that "the city must continue to function, regardless of who is in power, and people must receive services" (Pikitup Manager C, 14/08/2024).

What does this imply? That the rationale behind institutional resilience becomes evident through the New Public Management (NPM) principle, which encourages decentralised structures. Municipal-owned entities (MOEs) operate as independent organisations, allowing them to function autonomously even during political shifts resulting from unstable coalitions.

Furthermore, one councillor noted that unstable leadership should not impede the provision of services or hinder the committee's capacity to perform oversight effectively. She explained that:

... Officials are employees of the city, not politics, so the work should be able to flow. They [officials] must ensure the work continues until the new mayor is elected. So, service delivery should not be compromised because someone has been removed, and someone new is still to come in... (Councillor D, 1/11/2024).

Concerning the Section 79 EIS committee, this councillor firmly believed that unless the committee Chairperson was voted out when coalitions collapsed, there was no reason for the committee not to continue its work and scheduled meetings.

Ultimately, the councillors recognised that prolonged leadership instability could result in a reduced seriousness regarding oversight, as the committee is accountable to the council and its reports can only be presented there. Furthermore, complacency tends to arise among members when the council fails to convene due to political instability or the absence of a mayor.

This sub-section focuses on how bureaucratic structures have demonstrated significant resilience in sustaining the provision of essential services despite regular changes in the CoJ's political leadership.

However, the following section challenges the viewpoints discussed above.

5.1.1.2 Oversight Mechanism Vulnerable to Political Instability

In line with the principle of decentralisation outlined earlier, it can be assumed that the Section 79 EIS committee could remain unaffected by the multilayered oversight system established in the restructured public sector due to NPM reforms.

Participants strongly believed that the frequent leadership changes and political instability arising from unstable coalitions in the CoJ significantly impacted the oversight of the EIS committee. Despite differing views on these effects, certain commonalities emerged, particularly managers' and officials' recognition that coalitions and ongoing

leadership transitions significantly influence the Section 79 EIS committee's effectiveness as a legislative oversight tool used to hold the executive accountable and ensure efficient service delivery.

According to an official from EISD, each new coalition government iteration “leads to new councillors arriving, sometimes with a new chairperson as well; they often have no prior knowledge of waste management” (EISD Official C, 9/09/2024). For the official, this indicates a lack of stability in the Section 79 EIS committee due to the frequent changes in councillors serving on the committee.

Furthermore, the councillors might come from “another committee or have never served on one before. Now they are learning about this portfolio” (EISD Official C, 9/09/2024). The official believed that Section 79 committees ought to be exempt from frequent changes in councillors serving on them to prevent destabilisation of the committee's work.

The evident implication is that frequent changes in leadership result in alterations to the committee's composition, including the appointment of a new chairperson and, at times, new members. The unintended consequence of unstable leadership is a perpetual cycle of new members joining and leaving the committee, undermining its stability. Other officials and the manager elaborated on this viewpoint, emphasising that frequent changes in committee composition negatively impact oversight.

One official stated that the new committee members were thrust into the complex governance of municipal waste management systems within a highly technical portfolio despite having scant previous knowledge. This further (i) widened the knowledge gap between the political oversight provided by the Section 79 EIS committee and the strategic oversight offered by the EISD, and (ii) perpetuated superficial oversight by the committee, as it is performed on work with which they were unfamiliar (EISD Official A, 11/09/2024).

Some councillors believe that the political instability within the Council leads to changes in the committee's composition and affects consistent oversight. For instance, one

councillor noted that new committee members begin by familiarising themselves with the Environment and Infrastructure Services portfolio, as it is a technical area and “you don’t walk into meetings and start commenting on matters you don’t know” (Councillor B, 24/10/2024). This statement implies that the newly appointed councillors on the committee are still learning its operations and require time to adjust, which includes initially getting acquainted with the portfolio.

Another councillor advocated for the newly appointed committee members to be provided with orientation before they were assigned or reassigned to oversight committees. The councillor urged that they be “capacitated and trained” (Councillor G, 18/11/2024).

In this sense, the EIS portfolio is significant as it encompasses the technical reports submitted to it and the complex tasks carried out by its entities and departments.

Surprisingly, long-serving councillors admitted that “induction and proper training” (Councillor C, 28/10/2024) were once essential to the orientation of new councillors joining the CoJ and the Section 79 oversight committees; however, this practice had become inconsistent in recent years. This could be attributed to the containment of municipal costs and increased scrutiny regarding expenditure and resource utilisation.

The councillors raised several significant concerns. They observed that the induction process is not carried out, training and workshops at the Council and committee levels are rarely held, and the committee's strategic planning is sometimes delayed. Consequently, the committee's annual action plan, which outlines its activities, is incomplete.

A councillor explained that “the action plan is our bible, and without it, there are no oversight visits” (Councillor A, 4/11/2024). This suggests that a Section 79 EIS committee without a schedule for physical inspections of areas and projects related to service delivery implementation is not meeting its obligations.

In summary, recurring changes in leadership and political instability within the CoJ have two impacts. First, they result in the restructuring of the oversight committee’s leadership

and members. Second, since new members embark on a learning curve, this can lead to oversight gaps while councillors adapt to the committee. The emphasis on new councillors highlighted that long-serving committee members have invaluable institutional knowledge. Moreover, frequent leadership changes due to coalition instability threaten the retention of institutional memory and understanding the complex, ongoing historical issues within the Environment and Infrastructure Services portfolio.

The next section analyses how changing leadership and coalition dynamics have shifted political priorities.

5.1.2 Impact of Political Shifts on Waste Management

Most interviewees voiced significant concerns about the effects of political instability on environmental management and the oversight of service delivery. This perspective was reinforced by the waste management expert, who contended that political instability affects not only oversight but also the Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC), the political head of the EIS portfolio. The expert explained that:

... Political instability has a profound effect because it means that the MMC, whoever holds the post of MMC, does not stay in the position long enough to develop an in-depth understanding of the sector [in this study, waste management]. The MMC also deals with other service delivery issues with a much higher profile and receives more attention from political decision-makers. (Expert, 25/09/2024).

The expert's comments suggest that frequent leadership changes undermine political accountability. Short tenures for political leaders make it difficult to enforce accountability.

Consequently, the brief time the MMC serves as the political leader of the Environment and Infrastructure Services portfolio will not be efficiently used. The focus will not be on understanding waste management. They will not pursue further information or a deeper understanding of the existing waste management system and the essential role of the oversight committee.

A councillor expressed a similar viewpoint regarding the reporting on waste management:

... The accountability and reports from both members [MMC] in charge and the entities are very poor. Basically, they highlight their failures, and we will know because we receive their reports, and then there's no recourse to correct them... (Councillor E, 19/11/2024).

The frustrated councillor has accepted that the oversight committee's findings will repeatedly fail to lead to meaningful environmental and service delivery improvements.

Another councillor believed the decline in landfill airspace was not unprecedented. He noted that as early as 2017, Pikitup consistently reported this challenge to the committee. Nevertheless, successive coalition governments did not implement the comprehensive waste-sorting infrastructure plans developed by the EISD. The councillor noted that “we have known about those challenges and plans for years and did nothing as a council”, alluding to the proposal for new waste sorting facilities aimed at redirecting recyclables away from landfill sites (Councillor D, 1/11/2024).

Another councillor attributed the issue to political shifts within the CoJ, stating that the frequent leadership changes mean that none of the mayors “have had the opportunity to become acquainted” with Pikitup’s long-term waste management strategies (Councillor B, 24/10/2024).

Councillors believe that the committee's capacity to oversee environmental issues is compromised. For instance, findings and recommendations regarding waste diversion and separation lose significance without adequate waste sorting facilities. Two councillors explained that the politically motivated reason for waste separation initiatives that were part of Jozi@Work was abandoned because of changing political priorities.

One long-serving councillor, an environmental activist, explained that over the years, “political priorities are not static; when winds of change blow, they also change” (Councillor F, 6/11/2024). This affects ordinary people and the essential services they are supposed to receive from the government.

The councillor also believed that the waste separation project between Pikitup and reclaimers' cooperatives, which are member organisations of waste reclaimers to collect, sort, and process recyclables from household waste (Godfrey et al., 2016), was cancelled because:

... Jozi@Work programme gave individuals and businesses opportunities to enhance themselves through initiatives like Separation at Source project...when Herman Mashaba came on board as Mayor of Johannesburg, he terminated the contract. He did not even care that C40 Cities championed S@S as a good step for environmental sustainability. So, that programme was scrapped and immediately affected the reclaimers and cooperatives... (Councillor F, 6/11/2024).

Another councillor shared the same view and explained that:

...Whoever is in charge of the government will want to implement or change things to be in line with his or her manifesto. For example, the Jozi @Work people worked directly for Pikitup to separate and sort waste, but then the other political party came in and laid off all those people. So, leadership changes led to job cuts ... (Councillor A, 4/11/2024).

The councillor regarded those changes as detrimental to reducing the environmental impact of waste, notably since the project endorsed recycling initiatives. The two councillors believed that the discontinuation resulted from political differences between the Democratic Alliance (DA) and the African National Congress (ANC) regarding job-creating initiatives associated with waste management services.

A Pikitup manager highlighted the political short-sightedness and misunderstanding of the waste management value chain. Pikitup's effectiveness is tied to municipal governance and is affected by changes, instability, shifting priorities, and inability to execute long-term infrastructure planning due to shifts in policy focus.

The manager explained that when the DA-led coalition took charge from 2016 to 2019, the primary aim of the CoJ was to upgrade the ageing landfill infrastructure. The Robinson

Deep landfill site was meant to serve as a pilot project for modernising waste management facilities. However, the initiative was:

... severely compromised by politicians who fought its costs and redirected funds to other things, causing delays and partial implementation. Politics won, funding was cut, and now, fast forward to today, we have to deal with challenges with landfill sites that project could have taught us something... (Pikitup Manager A, 13/08/2024).

The manager believed a successful pilot project would provide valuable insights into how new technologies could facilitate efficient landfill management and generate significant data.

A councillor remarked that since “waste is not a pressure point,” there is no concerted effort to address its environmental implications, especially in a politically unstable Council (Councillor D, 1/11/2024). Additionally, the changing political priorities negatively impact the long-term planning of waste management infrastructure in the CoJ. The councillor's viewpoint encapsulates this sub-section, emphasising that ongoing changes in political leadership not only distract from long-term policy planning and implementation but also alter the monitoring of service delivery.

5.1.3 Political Differences Filter Through into the Oversight Committee

Political influences are present in the committee and highlight two significant fissures that are logically unresolvable yet perpetually recurrent. Firstly, the committee, acting as an extension of the Council's power to hold the executive accountable, reflects the Council's disarray, drawing attention to widespread governance challenges. Secondly, as one councillor remarked, “political differences will always filter through. They cannot be avoided” (Councillor E, 19/11/2024), acknowledging that councillors represent their political parties within the CoJ.

Furthermore, the waste management expert attributed the lack of prioritisation and attention to waste management to the “perpetual turnover of individuals in the MMC position” (Expert, 25/09/2024), suggesting that Pikitup's internal power dynamics

negatively affect political oversight. These dynamics occur outside the Section 79 EIS committee in the contentious realm of party politics. This suggests that formal and informal political oversight coexists in the struggle to control entities within the CoJ, not limited to Pikitup. For example, “deployed cadres in relatively junior positions in Pikitup may hold senior positions in political parties” (Expert, 25/09/2024) and therefore exert undue influence and power, which can undermine essential oversight.

It is crucial to recognise that the CoJ, oversight committee and Pikitup are not monolithic. Instead, they operate within networks of rival power centres, as illustrated by various coalitions. Some individuals in these institutions possess a deeper insight into the importance of integrating sustainable environmental practices with service delivery than others.

According to the waste management expert, political influence that extends beyond the municipality can affect party politics during periods of instability, causing the cycle of turbulence to continue with the CoJ.

This view was endorsed by a councillor who believed that instability within the municipality is influenced by “external forces that utilise political parties to jeopardise the city’s reputation, expose its weaknesses, and undermine the reputation of other parties” (Councillor F, 6/11/2024). For example, the councillor believed that

... Most of the time, the protest and people marching to Pikitup depots or offices are not genuine workers’ issues. There are powerful people and organisations behind them who are against the EPWP programme because they want to put our brothers from another country [Lesotho] in those positions... (Councillor F, 6/11/2024).

As articulated above, external influence can impede service delivery by delaying programme implementation. This is problematic for the oversight committee, which is meant to ensure accountability and continuity in CoJ governance.

One councillor noted that political manoeuvring pervades the Section 79 EIS Committee. The instability of multi-party coalitions and the subsequent turnover in political leadership undermine the committee's continuity. Frequent changes in committee

membership require new councillors to take time to adapt. Another critical perspective is that councillors with a technical understanding of the city's waste management systems are sometimes reshuffled, which frustrates others; as one councillor stated, "We used to have a committee member with technical knowledge, but because he fought a lot with his leader, he was redeployed. The committee lost" (Councillor A, 4/11/2024).

All seven councillors believed that, despite its political influence, the Section 79 EIS committee strives to remain neutral, address citywide issues, and be objective in its work. One councillor explained:

... If we let our differences dominate us, we will not have a way forward as the city. As a committee, we work well together and cooperate. Sure, in the Council Chamber, we act out because that is the nature of things, but in committee, we are a team and I think that comes political maturity of knowing we must provide basic services to our people... (Councillor F, 6/11/2024).

The recognition of how councillors interact with one another in the Council exemplifies a performance intended to appeal to the audience, which includes their political leaders. Moreover, as previously established, the dynamics of party interactions in a coalition government marked by political instability necessitate such performative behaviour.

Another councillor remarked that operating within a political environment requires accepting the emergence of differences and the potential for conflicts. However, it is crucial to emphasise that such incidents should not detract from the S79 committee's responsibilities. When disagreements escalate, they are dealt with "quickly because the committee's work cannot be put aside while politicians fight" (Councillor E, 19/11/2024). Ideally, despite the political differences, the committee prioritises its work above such differences.

Several councillors also acknowledged three interconnected issues: (i) representing political parties with distinct mandates, (ii) serving diverse ward constituencies, and (iii) differing experiences regarding basic service challenges. The councillors noted that this is where being a political leader on the council affects committee work. Committee members raise issues affecting their wards during committee meetings because they

must “report back to constituencies as the councillors in the CoJ, elected by communities to represent them” (Councillor A, 24/10/2024).

One councillor explained that the Section 79 committee is not a place to “platform ward issues because it deals with big-picture issues” (Councillor G, 18/11/2024) of the CoJ. Overall, the councillor asserted that the dynamics of party politics do not significantly manifest within the committee, allowing it to focus on the best interests of the city's residents.

The committee councillors acknowledged that the challenges related to service delivery faced by their constituencies could hinder their efforts. Nonetheless, the focus remains on sustaining oversight of citywide matters, as the committee operates on behalf of the Council.

In summary, it is clear that the disintegration of coalitions results in frequent leadership changes within the Council of the CoJ and the Section 79 committees, undermining the latter's continuity and effectiveness. Political instability stemming from volatile coalitions exacerbates divisions within the Section 79 EIS Committee. Despite its political basis, the committee remains devoted to preserving neutrality and impartiality. Its oversight is directed towards the CoJ, rather than (i) the interests of political parties or (ii) specific concerns related to the wards of its members. As a result, political disputes are promptly resolved to maintain focus, ensuring that the committee's oversight remains nonpartisan.

The following section examines how the committee addresses the inherent tensions between delivering essential services and protecting the environment.

5.2 Reconciling Service Delivery Needs and Environmental Sustainability

The primary challenge in reconciling waste service delivery with environmental protection, according to Hector and Lambrechts (2024), is that the government's approach to creating a greener South African economy has prioritised economic growth and development over environmental protection and social equity. This systematic

preference for economic gains results in insufficient political prioritisation and a lack of will to implement comprehensive waste management strategies that address both service delivery and environmental goals concurrently (Kubanza & Simatele, 2020).

A study by Godfrey et al. (2021) has shown that the population growth of the CoJ outpaces infrastructure development, which often leads to short-term prioritisation of visible infrastructure, such as housing, to address immediate political and social pressures at the expense of integrated waste infrastructure planning.

Kubanza (2025) adds to this, stating that resource scarcity in waste management and the deficit in its infrastructure compel zero-sum choices between immediate service demands and investment in environmental protection initiatives.

Studies on local government governance challenges indicate that Section 79 Oversight Committees are ill-equipped to manage the complex interplay between waste service delivery and environmental protection, owing to inadequate oversight mechanisms, limited resources, and institutional frameworks that create conflicts between urgent service demands and environmental sustainability (Baloyi, 2023; Fourie & Waldt, 2023; Janda & Masango, 2024; Maganoe, 2023).

From the preceding literature, it is evident that prioritising economic growth, visible infrastructure, and immediate needs over environmental protection has created a fundamental structural barrier to reconciling waste service delivery with environmental protection.

The literature supported the researcher by illustrating a governance dilemma in which two essential municipal functions are handled as rivals instead of as allies, undermining both service delivery effectiveness and environmental sustainability.

Is it possible to reconcile the tension between the two? The perspectives of the participants offer important insights into the ongoing challenges of achieving reconciliation, as outlined in the following sections.

5.2.1 Participants' Views: Service Delivery and Environmental Impact

Urbanisation has increased waste generation, which in turn heightens the demand for essential services and places additional pressure on service delivery. Most participants believed this diverts attention from tackling the detrimental effects of increased MSW on the environment.

5.2.2 Councillors' Views on Environmental Protection

All councillors interviewed from the S79 EIS committee emphasised that prioritising service delivery is essential for the CoJ municipality. This prevailing perspective stems from their experiences addressing their constituents' difficulties in accessing basic services within the wards they represent.

Their roles as elected Ward representatives who observe service delivery failures in their communities daily shaped their perspectives.

Councillors have firsthand experience with litter, illegal burning, and dumping in their wards. Furthermore, those with landfill sites in their wards are conscious of the pollution associated with these sites. Thus, councillors are acutely aware of the environmental impacts of increasing municipal waste and its management. The paradox then arises from the difficulty of balancing service delivery with environmental protection with the pressures of rapid urbanisation, outward urban expansion, and a growing demand for various social services.

One councillor explained that municipal services mainly focus on addressing urgent needs because:

... When you have people suffering to fill their stomachs every night and are worried about shelter over their heads, they're not thinking about the environment. And so, too, is the city not thinking about waste management either...(Councillor G, 18/11/2024).

From the councillor's viewpoint, tackling the existing socio-economic challenges before environmental considerations is essential to the CoJ service delivery mandate. Additionally, the committee members acknowledged the need to establish a suitable

balance, ensuring that service delivery does not adversely affect the environment and that environmental considerations do not impede it.

According to a long-serving councillor who attended several workshops by the Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40), reconciling the two imperatives can only be achieved when the political leadership of the CoJ "considers the environmental impacts associated with the essential services required to run their cities" (Councillor B, 24/10/2024). For the councillor, this involves integrating environmental sustainability into all infrastructure and development planning aspects in policy design. For example, the entities and departments must perform an environmental impact assessment for each mega project they undertake.

A councillor who is an environmental activist asserted that in recent years the CoJ had commenced the adoption of a more integrated approach to harmonising service delivery with environmental protection. The councillor elaborated that even within the EIS portfolio, there are "policies with environmental aspects. I cannot say for sure that a comprehensive, singular environmental policy exists" (Councillor E, 19/11/2024). The emphasis was that no strategy focuses only on environmental protection in the CoJ.

The councillor cited the environmental components embedded within policies such as the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), and the Growth and Development Strategy as pivotal long-term planning initiatives. This fragmentation, where environmental issues are scattered across various policies, constrains oversight by the committee.

Two of the seven councillors interviewed believed that the committee's ability to oversee environmental issues was constrained by time. The committee had to quickly review various reports from the entire portfolio, not just those of waste management. Even though they belonged to fundamentally opposing political parties, both expressed deep concern about the inadequate time available for the committee to ensure compliance with environmental regulations.

As one of the two councillors explained, "When 15 other items are presented on this committee day, alongside the quarterly reports, focusing on environmental issues falls by the wayside because attention is on service delivery concerns" (Councillor A,

4/11/2024). The councillor stated that the committee lacks time to verify the accuracy of environmental issues reported through physical site inspection. As a result, these issues are brought up during time-constrained meetings or as follow-up questions, which do not represent effective oversight.

The other councillor highlighted the committee structure as another issue, noting that the members who “sit on these portfolios are ward councillors who do not always have time because they are busy addressing numerous service delivery issues” (Councillor F, 6/11/2024). This emphasises that the committee primarily addresses immediate service delivery needs, making environmental oversight less of a priority.

Two councillors' perspectives reveal significant limitations in the committee's oversight. These limitations arise from the absence of specific CoJ policies protecting the environment, time constraints that hinder thorough oversight and accountability, and interruptions driven by service delivery demands, as the emphasis is placed on them.

5.2.3 The Perspective of Pikitup Managers

The prevailing opinion among Pikitup managers was that municipal waste management faces substantial challenges due to rapid urban growth. The large volume and constant rise in waste put significant pressure on current facilities and infrastructure, which are already lacking and poorly maintained.

One manager explained that (i) declining investment exacerbates infrastructure problems, (ii) the waste fleet, plant and equipment are insufficient, (iii) bylaws are inadequately enforced, and (iv) there is a lack of investment in waste minimisation programmes. According to the manager, the four challenges mean Pikitup will continue to face “non-compliance with current legislation and regulation” (Pikitup Manager D, 3/09/2024).

Another Pikitup manager stated that the pressure to deliver services efficiently and keep the city clean makes it challenging to “channel the limited resources we have to environmental issues because when we do, our operations become affected” (Pikitup Manager B, 14/08/2024). The manager emphasised that the cleanup of illegal dumping is

not regarded as a “core activity” for Pikitup; therefore, managing it becomes a financial burden on its operations (Ibid.)

Both managers indicated that waste management is hampered by interconnected infrastructure issues, which exacerbate Pikitup’s environmental impact. Consequently, this problem endures, emphasising service delivery even when it is ineffective and inefficient.

5.2.4 The Perspective of EISD Officials

EISD officials contend that the existing waste management systems render it impossible to balance service delivery with the demands of environmental protection effectively. One reason is a "lack of political will, as most of our politicians are not forward-thinking. Decisions tend to be short-sighted because the next political leader could be elected tomorrow” (EISD Official C, 09/09/2024).

From the above, it is clear that the long-term thinking required to address challenges beyond short-term services is insufficient, as politicians are aware of their limited time in office and do not prioritise reconciling service delivery needs with environmental sustainability beyond their tenure.

In contrast to the shortsighted political viewpoint, another EISD member believed that a comprehensive strategy prioritising environmental protection is “a policy that exists only on paper”, referring to the council-approved Integrated Waste Management Plan (EISD Official B, 09/09/2024). The official explained that the low prioritisation of waste management at CoJ means the plan will remain just that, a plan. It is unlikely to be implemented. The official added that the IWMP represents a comprehensive strategy incorporating innovative technologies and reforms to existing systems to address the tension between service delivery and environmental protection.

The official also believed that politicians in the Council frequently inquire about its significance and related expenditures, notwithstanding the arguments favouring the

Waste-to-Energy (WtE) initiative that uses incinerators to transform non-recyclable waste into electricity and diminish reliance on landfills.

5.2.5 The Expert's Contrarian Viewpoints

The expert interviewed in this research believed that the CoJ, Pikitup, and the EISD do not adequately emphasise research and evidence-based policymaking. This concern is evident in the recycling and separation at source initiatives undertaken without empirical support; instead, they are primarily based on ideological principles. In countering the arguments made by EISD officials in the preceding section, the expert contended that the Waste-to-Energy (WtE) was based on a flawed assumption and strongly argued against using incinerators in waste-to-energy processes, describing them as “highly problematic and detrimental, as they ignore the significant environmental harm mainly because of the greenhouse gas implication” (Expert, 25/09/2024). Additionally, the expert noted that building and maintaining an incinerator requires substantial financial resources and crucial materials for effective operation.

The expert believed that promoting incinerators as a solution to the waste management issue suggests that the CoJ is indifferent to environmental concerns. It adopts the reasoning that “if we run out of land to bury it in, then we'll burn it and release it into the air” (Expert, 25/09/2024). This implies that incineration also contributes to environmental pollution due to the emissions resulting from waste combustion. Furthermore, establishing an incinerator “solidifies existing patterns” of industrial production, mass consumption, and disposability, especially when there is an urgent need to transition towards more sustainable, zero-waste methods (Expert, 25/09/2024).

The expert also expressed significant concern that all the CoJ stakeholders in municipal waste management treat the environment as a mere receptacle for endless amounts of waste produced by society. This situation is considered unacceptable, mainly due to the implications of greenhouse gas emissions linked with incineration.

Pikitup and the EISD claim that incineration of the Waste-to-Energy (WtE) processes “can be seen to be part of a sustainable integrated waste management strategy,” which

highlights the apparent disregard for evidence-based policy (Expert, 25/09/2024). As a result, the municipality has made little progress in developing an effective strategy for reducing landfill waste.

Plans and strategies are often "not evidence-based but purely ideological, based on the assumption that private sector practices" can be extrapolated to the public sector (Expert, 25/09/2024). Instead, the EISD and Pikitup promote incineration as an alternative to landfilling, which causes significant harm to the environment. They also encourage the continuation of current waste production levels, potentially increasing them to facilitate the establishment of more incinerators.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter examined various perspectives on the Section 79 EIS committee's endeavours to balance service delivery needs with environmental protection. What becomes clear is that reconciling these often conflicting imperatives is impossible in (i) an unstable political environment, (ii) where waste management is deprioritised due to immediate service delivery needs arising from unplanned urban expansion, and (iii) leading to increased waste generation. Moreover, promoting and implementing alternative waste treatment methods, such as Waste-to-Energy (WtE) incineration, incentivise the maintenance of current waste generation levels and may even encourage an increase, thus justifying the need for additional incinerators.

The final chapter presents the findings and insights derived from them.

6 CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This final chapter presents the findings and explores a way forward, contributing to the broader discussion on how municipalities can tackle the negative environmental impacts of waste management services.

It was enlightening to see how the data, literature, theoretical framework, and qualitative methods employed in the study reveal that although formal governance frameworks for political accountability are in place, their effectiveness is undermined by insufficient accountability mechanisms, weak enforcement, and limited technical capacity within the committee to evaluate complex environmental impacts.

The answer to the research question: *What role does political oversight in the CoJ municipality play in tackling the tensions between waste management service delivery and environmental impact? Is as follows:*

Political oversight by the Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Services (EIS) Committee in the CoJ plays a predominantly reactive and constrained role in addressing the conflict between waste service delivery and environmental protection.

The Committee's oversight is limited because the CoJ leadership prioritises political visibility over sustainability. This approach consistently values short-term gains and immediate service delivery needs over environmental concerns, which diminishes the potential for integrated long-term planning that could balance both objectives. Consequently, political oversight becomes trapped between the pressure for immediate service delivery and the need for long-term environmental sustainability.

From the perspective discussed above, the political oversight by the Section 79 (EIS) Committee contributes to the issue. It does not resolve the tension between the two imperatives and fails to effectively address the conflict between service delivery and environmental issues.

Moreover, the research findings addressed the research question by demonstrating that political instability significantly disrupts continuity within the Committee, as Councillors may leave due to coalition conflicts, which in turn hampers its effectiveness due to systemic limitations. Therefore, the role of political oversight becomes one of crisis management, with Councillors in the Committee focusing on governance dilemmas arising from the uncertainties of CoJ Council politics, rather than on service delivery and environmental protection.

Lastly, the interpretivist approach played a crucial role in revealing the complex dynamics and stakeholder experiences, highlighting how political oversight maintains rather than resolves the tensions between waste service delivery and environmental protection. This is largely attributed to the CoJ's ineffective waste governance framework, coupled with systematic neglect and low prioritisation of the waste management system, an essential service.

6.1 Findings and Way Forward

CoJ political leaders regard waste management as a low priority, leading to neglect and insufficient investment. The municipal budget centres on more urgent issues, forcing Pikitup to operate on a constrained budget. This compromises service delivery and results in poorly managed landfills that harm the environment. The ripple effects of this deprioritisation are:

(1) Immediate visible needs take precedence over long-term waste management services and the environment.

Political decision-making addresses urgent service delivery issues arising from urbanisation, population growth, and unplanned development. However, because of these contributing factors, waste management is often overlooked, even as its volume increases. This highlighted the shortcomings of the Section 79 EIS Committee, as the councillors have struggled to effectively advocate for prioritising waste services and Pikitup within the Council to their fellow politicians.

The lack of regular inspections shows a failure in supervising post-closure landfill management. Financial limitations have resulted in insufficient upkeep of waste management systems, where aging infrastructure has exacerbated landfill conditions and heightened pollution levels.

At the same time, long-term investment in sustainable waste management infrastructure encounters resistance, as waste management is often regarded as a secondary concern. This reluctance stems from significant initial costs and a lack of immediate visible benefits or results.

Therefore, the Section 79 EIS Committee struggles to balance waste service delivery and environmental protection due to a neglectful waste governance system within the CoJ. The above-discussed factors and neglect have resulted in ongoing negative environmental impacts at the Kya Sands landfill site. The observations recorded at the site show the enduring environmental consequences of traditional waste management practices, which are explored in detail in sub-section 2.5 and chapter four.

(2) Decentralisation has created complex accountability layers for Pikitup.

While designed for checks and balances, the principal-agent relationships outlined in sub-section 2.3 result in paralysis, as Pikitup is accountable to too many authorities. Furthermore, this results in overlapping responsibilities, complicating the process of enhancing accountability and oversight because of each authority's varying mandates and directives.

(3) Coalition governments cause instability and frequent leadership changes.

Frequent leadership changes disrupt the oversight committee because they require the reshuffling of councillors assigned to it, including its chairperson. Without the chairperson, the committee's work halts until the Council elects a new one. During this transition, without a chairperson, there is no oversight of Pikitup's performance, EISD, overall waste service delivery, and sustainable waste management planning. Additionally, reshuffles necessitate adjustment, particularly because new councillors need to familiarise themselves with a complex portfolio. This interrupts the continuity of the committee's oversight.

(4) The Section 79 EIS committee does not possess the authority to enforce its recommendations.

While the committee is an extension of the Council's authority, its advisory nature limits its oversight capabilities. The committee can summon Pikitup's executive management to explain its underperformance and challenges and subsequently make recommendations to the Council, but it cannot enforce these, resulting in ineffective oversight. For example, it finds it difficult to ensure compliance with environmental regulations for landfill operations.

(5) There is a knowledge asymmetry between the committee, EISD, and Pikitup, which it oversees.

The department and Pikitup have an information advantage over the committee, which creates an information gap that disadvantages the committee and leaves it lacking the capacity and resources to assess the veracity of the reports. The committee relies on data and reports from the organisations it supervises, which may selectively disclose specific details, hindering its oversight and obscuring the actual state of waste management.

(6) Waste reclaimers can lead the CoJ to adopt effective waste separation, sorting and diverting away from landfills.

Reclaimers are experts in extracting value from waste streams. They can demonstrate to Pikitup how to establish an efficient waste separation programme. They are integral to the transition to a circular economy founded on waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and recovery. Thus, integrating reclaimers into the CoJ waste reduction initiative is crucial for reducing the volume of waste sent to landfills.

However, the transition from current linear waste management practices to a circular model faces several barriers, and this change is not guaranteed. The findings of this research indicate that immediate needs with clear benefits, which politicians can easily exploit, often overshadow environmental concerns. Furthermore, significant investment in infrastructure is necessary for initial implementation, and the results suggest that waste management lacks political prioritisation.

6.2 Reflections

Rather than providing recommendations, this study contributes to political discussions regarding waste management in the CoJ by emphasising the following:

- Due to limited budgets, Pikitup struggles with waste management and service delivery. This results in illegal dumping, littering, deteriorating landfill infrastructure, and polluting the area, creating tension between waste service delivery and environmental sustainability.
- Due to deprioritisation and neglect, political leaders have not recognised the connections between urban growth, environmental issues, and service delivery. Consequently, the incremental environmental degradation caused by CoJ landfill sites remains unaddressed.
- Political instability resulting from the collapse of coalition governments affects the Section 79 EIS Committee by altering its composition and leadership. This disrupts the committee's oversight function, leading to irregular meetings, fewer physical site visits, and challenges in monitoring performance and ensuring accountability.
- Streamlining the multi-layered accountability framework is essential because Pikitup is currently accountable to its Board, the EISD, the Section 79 EIS Committee, the City Manager, and provincial oversight for environmental compliance to reduce overlaps, conflicting priorities, and oversight paralysis.

Collectively, the issues mentioned above limit the Section 79 EIS committee's ability to achieve:

- Monitoring the waste management service delivery of Pikitup;
- The implementation of environmental protection measures; and
- The long-term planning for environmental sustainability.

6.3 Conclusion

The research consistently highlights the intersections and interactions among various issues, such as service delivery, urban infrastructure, environmental factors, political accountability, and environmental degradation. This includes aligning waste service delivery with ecological protection, balancing long-term planning with immediate needs, and addressing political instability, frequent leadership changes, disrupted oversight, and the perception by political leadership of waste management services as a low priority. This perception ultimately deprioritises waste management in municipal budget allocations and overall focus.

The Kya Sands landfill site issue clearly illustrates how these intersections and interactions have contributed to the ineffectiveness and failure of the Section 79 EIS Committee oversight role by impairing its capabilities.

Can any discussion about the oversight role of the Section 79 EIS Committee in balancing waste service delivery with environmental protection overlook the previously mentioned intersections and interactions?

The answer is no.

The cumulative impact of these various influences, intersections, and interactions within the CoJ does not solely affect the Committee's oversight; it also impacts basic service delivery, long-term environmental protection, and waste management systems.

It is, therefore, crucial to recognise that rapid urbanisation in the CoJ is driven by the growth of the urban population, leading to urban expansion. This, in turn, increases the demand for essential services, underscoring the need for infrastructure development and effective service delivery. Furthermore, as the city expands, it results in heightened consumption and waste generation, emphasising the necessity for efficient municipal waste management, service delivery, and a sustained focus on environmental issues.

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8 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Interview Questions for Pikitup Managers

1. What are the primary responsibilities in your role at Pikitup?
2. What does Pikitup waste management infrastructure comprise of?
3. How can the CoJ municipality better balance service delivery with environmental goals in waste management?
4. What are the main challenges faced by Pikitup in ensuring effective waste management service delivery?
5. What do you understand as the impacts of landfills activities on the environment?

Probe: How can we reconcile the ongoing need for landfills in waste management with the principles of environmental sustainability?

6. What are the environmental regulatory requirements Pikitup is expected to keep?

Probe – How does the company navigate those requirements in providing service delivery?

Landfill questions

7. In your experience, what are the main challenges for landfills today?
8. What long-term strategies exist to explore alternatives to traditional landfilling?

Probe What are the barriers to adopting more sustainable alternatives to landfills?

9. How frequent are environmental impact assessment of landfills conducted?

Oversight Questions

10. Do you know about the Section 79 oversight committee?

Probe – what are the main challenges to providing effective oversight?

Probe – Can you give an example of effective oversight on waste management?

11. What role does the waste reclaimers play in Johannesburg's waste management ecosystem?
12. Is there a relationship between Pikitup and the waste reclaimers?

Probe: What are the main areas of conflict and cooperation?

APPENDIX B:

Interview Questions for Environment and Infrastructure Services Department Officials

1. What is the role of the EISD to ensure landfills compliance with waste management regulations?
2. In what ways has the CoJ prioritised environmental concerns in its waste management policies?
3. What impact does the waste generation of a rapidly urbanising municipality have on the environment?

Landfill questions

4. In your experience, what are the main challenges for landfills today?
5. What long-term strategies exist to explore alternatives to traditional landfilling?

Probe What are the barriers to adopting more sustainable alternatives to landfills?

6. How frequent are environmental impact assessment of landfills conducted?
7. In your experience, how has the EISD worked with Pikitup to address environmental effects of landfills?

Oversight Questions

8. Do you know about the Section 79 oversight committee?

Probe – what are the main challenges to providing effective oversight?

9. In what ways can political oversight at Council can be improved?
10. Are there any ongoing debates regarding the impact of political instability in the CoJ in shaping waste management policies and practices?

Waste Pickers questions

11. What do waste pickers play in CoJ's waste management ecosystem?
12. Is there a relationship between Pikitup and the informal waste collectors?

Probe: What are the main areas of conflict and cooperation?

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for Councillors in Section 79 Environment and Infrastructure Services Committee

1. What is the profile of your Ward?

Prompt; Are there concerns about waste and the environment?

2. What are your overall views of the S79 Committee
3. How long have you been serving in the S79 EIS Committee?
4. What is your understanding the committee's role to be?

Probe How effective is the committee in fulfilling its mandate?

5. In what ways does the Committee ensure there is a balance in service delivery and protecting the environment?
6. What are the main concerns in delivering effective waste management service?
7. what do you understand by the circular economy?

Landfill questions

8. In your experience, what are the main challenges for landfills today?
9. In your experience, how Pikitup landfills affect the environment?

Waste Pickers questions

10. What do waste pickers play in CoJ's waste management ecosystem?
11. Is there a relationship between Pikitup and the informal waste collectors?

Political

12. Does the political instability due to frequent leadership change in the CoJ affect the provision of waste management services?

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions for the Expert

1. How does Pikitup waste management services tie into your academic interest or expertise?
2. How does Johannesburg's rapid urbanisation and population growth impact its waste management capabilities and environmental outcomes?
3. In what ways can the knowledge of waste collectors inform and influence social and environmental justice policymaking?
4. What role does the informal waste sector play in Johannesburg's waste management ecosystem?

Landfill questions

5. In your experience, what are the main challenges for landfills today?
6. What are the barriers to the CoJ municipality adopting sustainable alternatives to landfills?
7. In your research, have you observed any initiatives in waste management policies to mitigate the environmental impact of landfills?

Municipal Oversight

8. How crucial is the Section 79 Committee in balancing the provision waste management services with environmental protection concerns?
9. Based on your research, how would you respond to arguments that waste pickers are predominantly not South Africa and therefore integrating them into the system would be a challenge?
10. Are there any ongoing debates regarding the impact of political instability in the CoJ in shaping waste management policies and practices?
11. In what ways can Pikitup address the conflicts between its landfill practices and environmental degradation?

APPENDIX E
Ethics Clearance Certificate



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: DEVS-2024-01

PROJECT TITLE

Service Delivery and Environmental Sustainability: A Case Study of Johannesburg's Pikitup

INVESTIGATOR

Ms Molopyane Mamokgethi

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR

Development Studies, School of Social Sciences

DATE CONSIDERED

04/08/2024

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved unconditionally

RISK LEVEL

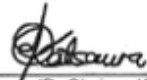
LOW RISK

EXPIRY DATE

03/08/2025

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE: 05/08/2024

CHAIRPERSON


(Dr Obvious Katsaura)

cc: Supervisor: Prof David Dickinson

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and ONE COPY returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.


Signature

Date

18 / 08 / 2024

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX F

Letter of Permission from the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality



City of Johannesburg
Department of Corporate & Shared Services
Office of the Group Head: Group Human Capital Management

6th Floor, B Block
Metropolitan Centre
158 Civic Boulevard
Braamfontein

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South Africa
2000

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03 September 2024
Mamokgethi Molopyane
Masters: Development Studies
University of Witwatersrand

Ref: Permission to conduct research study

This letter serves to acknowledge receiving the letter requesting permission to conduct research in the City of Johannesburg under the title: **"SERVICE DELIVERY AND ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY A CASE STUDY OF PIKITUP"**. I am aware that the study entails the collection of information from the City, city officials and participants from communities through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, observation participation and other fora of the city.

The research study is promoted by the City of Johannesburg because it helps both students and practitioners to gain an understanding of the sociology of the City, as it evolves and contributes towards the building of developmental local government.

I, Tersia Johanna Groenewald, as delegated authority of the City of Johannesburg Municipality (the City), hereby give permission to the primary researcher, Mamokgethi Molopyane, the following:

To collect and publish information about the City is publicly not available, for the research project titled: **"SERVICE DELIVERY AND ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY A CASE STUDY OF PIKITUP"**.

- This authorisation is based on mutual understanding that the City's name can be revealed in her/his project; and
- The researcher contacts the relevant department for arrangements pertaining to the research; and
- The information provided by the employees or any other means (such as company's archived documents or reports) of the City is purely for academic purposes and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Please note that on completion of the study, a copy of the research report should be submitted to the City of Johannesburg in honour of your commitment.

I urge you to present this letter of permission whenever you come across officials and participants in the research study. I thank you for choosing the City of Johannesburg to conduct the study.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Takalani Maria Wakpo".

Takalani Maria Wakpo (On behalf of Tersia Groenewald)
Administration Officer
Tel: 011 407 6847
Email: takalaniw@joburg.org.za

APPENDIX G

Letter of Permission from the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality



City of Johannesburg Pikitup

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Mamokgethi R. Molopyane
Email: MamokgethiM@joburg.org.za

06 June 2024

Dear Ms. Molopyane

Your request for permission to conduct research on infrastructure for service delivery and environment sustainability (Postgraduate: Development Studies) within Pikitup is approved. Take note as a researcher, you are responsible for all ethical elements as shown in your letter of ethical clearance. Subsequently, you are responsible for informing all participating officials and public representatives of the research requirements as your research unfolds.

Pikitup will provide you with all the necessary support during your research process.

For further information and validation, please feel free to contact Ms. Precious Makhubela at **087 357 1002**.

Regards,

Bukelwa Njingolo
Managing Director: Pikitup SOC Limited
06 June 2024