

Infrastructural development has emphasis on road networks, water supplies, and growth points, which provide vital services and strengthen the rural economy. This does not mean reduction of attention on health and education. In the latter case, emphasis is now on quality rather than quantity.

The electoral system follows the multi-party approach. As a consequence, rural district and urban council elections tend to now attract more attention than national elections. A case in point is the recent Chitungwiza Executive Mayoral elections (28 and 29 December 1997) contested by the ruling ZANUPF Party candidate Joseph Macheke (MP) and independent Mayoral candidate Fidelis Mhashu (College Lecturer) which has been heralded as a test case for real democracy in Zimbabwe.

In urban areas, the most recent innovation (1995) is the creation of the institution of Executive Mayor in all Municipal Councils. Mayors in Municipal areas are elected popularly. Currently, a number of African countries are studying the system with a view to adopting it. The Executive Mayor is elected for a term of four years. The maximum an Executive Mayor can serve is eight years. As a result, a number of Parliamentarians are vying for the position.

Municipal authorities in Zimbabwe finance their operations from resources they generate locally such as property tax, service charges, loan funds borrowed mainly from Central Government and private sector institutions) under central government guarantee (i.e borrowing powers are sanctioned by government). Property taxation system in Zimbabwe is one of the best in Africa excluding South Africa especially with regards the law on property taxation and identification "Simon H Keith - Property Tax in Anglophone Africa, World Bank, 1993". This of course is not necessarily the case in rural areas and urban high density areas where the system is being developed.

Zimbabwe has however centralised the electoral system with effect from late 1997. Town Clerks are no longer Returning Officers as before. The Chitungwiza election was conducted by the National Electoral Commission. The registration process for candidates now follows the same procedure as national elections including payment of a deposit, which is forfeited if a candidate attracts less than 20% of the votes cast.

In terms of the future of local government in the Commonwealth, several policy issues ranging from the concept of decentralisation itself and its implication on governance and development have to be considered. In doing so, we need to address local government at two broad levels:

(a) **policy** - what are the functions to be devolved or are already