

## COUNCIL POLICY

<b>Councillors' Expenses and Facilities</b>	Document No:	CPL45.2
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Authorising Officer:	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>	

### Purpose

This policy supports requirements of the Local Government Act 1989, with specific reference to sections 74 and 75 that relate to the payment of allowances and out-of-pocket expenses to the Mayor and Councillors.

It also identifies expenses to be paid and facilities to be provided to the Mayor and Councillors relative to the functions of civic office.

### Scope

To assist Councillors in the discharge of their civic, statutory and policy making functions, Council will be responsible for the provision of a range of necessary facilities and the reimbursement of expenses specified within the policy.

Recognising the special role of the Office of Mayor, the policy also provides for expenses and facilities specific to that office.

Claims for facilities and expenses other than those included in the policy will be subject to Council resolution.

Council's facilities and services, as outlined in this policy, are available to the Mayor, and Deputy Mayor and Councillors while performing the official duties of office. These facilities and services are not available for use by members of a Councillor's family, unless the use is directly related to attendance at a civic function or another aspect of the Councillor's civic duties in the company of the Councillor.

If a Councillor does not claim a particular expense or use a particular facility, this cannot be offset against a claim for an additional amount of some other expense or facility.

### References

- Local Government Act 1989. Sections 74 and 75.
- Management Procedure Corporate Card Use
- Councillor Code of Conduct Policy
- Caretaker Policy Council Elections
- Email and Internet Access Management Policy

This Policy replaces:

Management Procedure – Attendance at Meetings and Conferences by Councillors (MPR40.1.0.01)

Management Procedure – Corporate Taxi Use (MPR45.2.0.03)

Management Procedure – Private Vehicle Use – Councillors (MPR45.2.0.04)

Management Procedure – Councillor Allowances (MPR45.2.0.05)

Management Procedure – Reimbursement of Expenses (MPR45.2.0.06)

Management Procedure – Communication Equipment Use – Councillors (MPR45.2.0.07)

Management Procedure – Councillor Meals (MPR45.2.0.08)

## Definitions

**Communications Equipment** includes any Personal Computer or Notebook Computer, Mobile Telephone or Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) eg Blackberry, Printer and Telephone together with network connection provided by Council to Councillors.

**Accessories** include Car Kits, non corporate software, or any other device or service beyond that provided throughout the organisation.

**Meetings Attendance** shall include any seminar, deputation, exhibition, meeting, training program, meeting, function or other activity relative to the responsibilities of civic office.

## Responsibility and Accountability

Councillors must provide original receipts to support reimbursement of expenses and complete documentation in support of a claim for reimbursement. Only those expenses explicitly covered in this policy will be reimbursed.

Requests for reimbursement should be received within sixty days of the cost being incurred. Claims for expenses six months or older will not be reimbursed.

Any advance payment made for the cost of a service associated with a civic duty must be reconciled within one month of receiving such payment and receipts supplied as verification.

Any reimbursement required to Council for non-Council related expenditure shall be made within sixty days of the cost being incurred or account being received.

As a minimum a summary of Councillor expenses as at the end of each financial year and anniversary of election day will be published on the Council's website.

## Policy

### Additional Expenses and Facilities for the Office of the Mayor

The Office of the Mayor operates to provide those functions of the Council best carried out by the Mayor. It is allocated a budget by Council on an annual basis, and within that budget staff and other resources may be employed as considered reasonable and appropriate. Any expenses incurred by the Mayoress, or person nominated by the Mayor to fulfil the civic role shall be deemed to be expenses of the Mayor.

Council will provide at its cost to the Mayor a fully registered, insured, maintained and fuelled vehicle for use by the Mayor on official duties and for private use. The vehicle type and usage shall be in accordance with Council's Fleet Policy. Council will also meet the cost of weekly cleaning of the Mayoral vehicle.

Council will provide the following Mayoral office facilities.

- Private office suitably equipped with quality furniture and shelving, including desk and meeting table.
- Computer, printer and corporate software.
- Telephone – Digital Handset with I.S.D. access.
- Fax machine.
- Personal Assistant and Secretarial Support are available to the Mayor during normal office hours.

The Mayor may be provided with other necessary assistance to enable the performance of the duties of civic office. Such assistance may include, but is not limited to the following:

- A Corporate Card will be made available to the Mayor for use while discharging the functions of the office. Use of a Corporate Card will be in accordance with the Corporate Card Procedure.
- Reasonable purpose specific clothing suitable to attend and participate in activities on behalf of Council requiring specialised non-standard attire.

## **Councillor's Allowance**

The Local Government Act currently provides for the Mayor and Councillors to be paid an expense allowance. The Act provides for allowances to be fixed by Order by the Minister of Local Government, within upper and lower limits specified in the Order. This flexibility enables Council to set a level appropriate to the municipality.

### **Payment of Allowances**

- Allowances shall be paid quarterly in advance, provided that upon a Councillor ceasing to hold office or pending an election, payment shall be withheld until such time as the Councillor is declared elected.
- Payment shall be made by cheque or electronic funds transfer, in a manner authorised in writing by the Councillor.
- Upon the Mayor or a Councillor ceasing to hold office, any moneys paid in advance shall be refunded within 30 days.
- Notwithstanding that the date of the election of the Mayor may vary in accordance with the Act, the Mayor having completed a full term of office shall not be entitled to any pro rata adjustment of allowance to take into account any days less than or exceeding their term of election.
- Councillors may elect to enter into an arrangement to effectively sacrifice allowance amounts into a complying superannuation fund in accordance with Guidelines established by Council and upon completion of the prescribed Australian Taxation Office documentation.

## **Carer Expenses**

The Council will reimburse the cost of necessary expenses for childcare up to and including the age of 16 years and the care of elderly, disabled and/or sick immediate family members of Councillors, while a Councillor is attending meetings or conferences in Australia in their capacity as a Councillor.

Child care costs are not eligible for reimbursement if paid to a family member or a person who normally or regularly lives with the Councillor, except where a live-in (professional) helper such as a nanny is required to work extra time at extra expense because of the Councillor's duties.

Carer expenses may consist of :

- Occasional child care centre fees
- Hourly fees
- Agency booking fees (if claimed)
- Reasonable travelling expenses at rates no greater than those prescribed in the Victorian Local Authorities Award 2001 (if claimed by the carer)

Fees are payable per hour (or part of an hour) subject to any minimum period which is part of the provider's usual terms, to a maximum hourly rate approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

Travelling expenses may cover the transport costs of the carer to and from the Councillor's residence or of the person to be cared for to and from the place of care.

Claims must be accompanied by a receipt from the care provider showing the date and time care was provided and details of the reason care was need on each occasion.

## **Communications**

### **Equipment Provided for Councillors**

Standard equipment provided:

- Mobile telephone or Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) eg Blackberry including hands free or device cradle for vehicle
- Printer
- Computer (PC or lap top)
- Internet access
- Telephone and Landline

### **Installation**

Council will arrange for the installation of the necessary telephone line and associated equipment and meet all connection costs including, where necessary, power supply. A facsimile machine will be installed if requested by the Councillor. Installed equipment including message facilities will remain at all times at the residence of the Councillor, or such other agreed designated location, during the term of office.

Accessories or services beyond the standard equipment referred to above may be provided upon written request. The cost of any accessories provided, will be deemed to be a discretionary operational expenditure and shown as an expense incurred by the Councillor.

### **Conditions of Use**

All Council supplied Telecommunications services such as Fax/phone lines or Mobile phones must reside on the City's main consolidated Telephone Account.

For Councillors who choose to use non-Council mobile phones (in lieu of Council supplied phones) a claim for reimbursement of expenses incurred on Council business may be made.

All Communications Equipment must be compatible and consistent with that which already exists within the City.

Use of software shall be in accordance with licence requirements.

### **Monthly Accounting for Communication Equipment**

Councillors who have a Council supplied mobile phone or telephone shall be given the individual opportunity to reimburse the Council for those calls, which are private calls. This opportunity shall be provided through the provision to Councillors of information relating to individual monthly phone accounts. Councillors will complete the Councillor Certification of Expenses Form confirming that costs were incurred while performing the duties as a Councillor. – refer attachment 1

All operational costs together with the cost of accessories will be treated as an expense attributable to the individual Councillor and published as part of the Summary of Councillor Expenses.

### **Other relevant matters**

Strict care must be taken in the custody and use of all Council equipment.

Loss or theft of the Communications Equipment must be reported immediately to the Manager, Customer Service and Councillor Support.

All equipment shall be returned within 30 days of the conclusion of the term of office.

## **Meetings Attendance**

Councillors will be given the opportunity of attending training programs, meetings conferences and functions etc based on relevance to the role and development of the Councillor with regard to Ward, Portfolio or Council appointed committee or delegate responsibilities.

## **Financial Limits and Approvals**

A meeting attendance where the individual cost per councillor is in excess of \$3000 as a total cost to Council must be subject to approval by a resolution of Council.

Meetings Attendance by a Councillor at a total cost to Council of:

- between \$1000 & \$3000 may be approved by the Chief Executive Officer,
- \$1000 or less may be approved by the Manager, Customer Service and Councillor Support,

subject to such expenditure for any single Councillor not exceeding \$3000 per any given financial year (or pro-rata amount in the financial year of the general Council election) without approval by resolution of Council.

## **Associated Meeting Attendance Costs Met by Council**

Subject to the limit of \$3000, Council will pay –

- registration fees
- main conference dinner if not covered by registration cost, together with all meals within reasonable limits for the duration of the attendance for the Councillor.
- transport to, from and during attendance.
- Council will pay for accommodation costs for stays located greater than 50klms outside the Municipality Expenditure will be payable for the nights of the particular activity attended and for the nights pre and post where necessary. Accommodation should be where practicable at the meeting venue or otherwise to a maximum of four star standard unless approved by the Chief Executive Officer. Any additional accommodation costs incurred as a result of extended stays or the attendance of partners and/or children shall be borne by the Councillor.

Application to attend any interstate or overseas meetings involving Council expenditure must be made on the Interstate/Overseas Travel Application form. Refer Attachment 2.

## **Reporting**

Within one month of returning from any meeting or conference approved at a meeting of Council, the attending Councillor must provide a report on the salient outcomes of the event.

Within one month upon return from any interstate or overseas travel the Councillor must provide and certify, a reconciliation of all expenditure incurred. Refer Attachment 3. The completed certification must be completed and submitted to the Governance Co-ordinator.

## **Travel**

All Councillor travel should be undertaken by utilizing the most direct route and the most practicable and economical mode of transport.

### **Private Vehicle Use**

Councillors are entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred in the use of their own private vehicle for Council purposes. Any expenses arising from a breach of road, traffic parking or other regulations or laws, or for damage or loss of a vehicle will not be reimbursed or funded by Council.

Council has in place insurance covering the loss of non claims bonus or excess payment up to a limit of \$1000 for Councillors vehicles used for Council business. Coverage is subject the vehicle being comprehensively insured and the incident being covered by this insurer.

Reasonable travel expenses include travel to and from Council Meetings, Councillor Briefings or other activities directly related to Council Business. Travel claims will be from the Councillors notified place of normal residence.

Council does not accept responsibility for reimbursement for:

- Travel from work or other locations where the kilometres claimed are greater than what would be claimed from the notified place of normal residence.
- Meetings arranged outside the City of Greater Geelong that would not form part of a Councillor' normal role.

Reimbursement shall be at the rates prescribed in the Victorian Local Authorities Award 2001.

- The Councillors Certification of Expenses Form must be completed for any Private Vehicle Use claim – refer attachment 1.

Car parking fees incurred while conducting Council business shall be reimbursed on the provision of original receipts.

Completed and signed forms shall be lodged with the Manager, Customer Service and Councillor Support who will arrange for prompt reimbursement.

### **Council Vehicle**

Where practicable and by prior arrangement through the Manager, Customer Service and Councillor Support, a Council vehicle or hire vehicle may be made available to Councillors for travel outside the City where use of private vehicles or other means of transport is not convenient.

### **Councillor Taxi Use**

Each Councillor will be provided with a "Cab-Charge" credit card (if requested) for use in the payment of taxi services for Council purposes only. Personal use in any form is not permitted. The Card is NOT to be used by persons other than the cardholder.

The Cabcharge Card shall be used in accordance with "Conditions of Use" issued by Cabcharge Australia. .

Loss or theft of the card must be reported immediately to the Manager, Customer Service and Councillor Support.

The card must be returned to the Manager, Customer Service and Councillor Support when the Councillor ceases to hold office.

### **Class of Air Travel**

Unless otherwise specified in a resolution of Council, the class of air travel to be used by a Councillor is to be economy class.

In the case of travel via a non-direct route, travel expenses are payable for the amount that would have been incurred if the most direct route had been available and followed at the same class of travel as was actually used. A claim for expenses must not exceed the amount actually paid.

Airline tickets are not transferable and cannot be used for defraying or offsetting any other costs including the costs of other persons accompanying the Councillor.

All air travel must be authorized by the Manager Customer Service and Councillor Support prior to booking.

### **Cash Advances**

To assist in meeting daily expenses incurred while traveling on Council business, Councillors will be offered a cash advance to cover those costs which cannot be paid for in advance. This may include accommodation, meals, fares and incidentals. Any unexpended cash advances shall be immediately returned to the Manager, Customer Service and Councillor Support. Reconciliation and receipts must be completed within one month of return.

### **Spouse/Partner Accompanying Person**

The cost of a spouse or partner for attendance at official Council functions is appropriate when accompanying a Councillor both:

- Within the Municipality
- Outside the Municipality but within the State when carrying out official duties.

The payment of expenses for spouses, partners or accompanying persons for attendance at appropriate functions shall be limited specifically to the ticket and meal. Peripheral expenses such as grooming, special clothing and transport are not reimbursable.

### **Expenses and Facilities for Councillors with Disabilities**

For any Councillor with a disability, Council will provide reasonable additional facilities and support, in order to allow that Councillor to perform their civic duties.

### **Insurance**

Councillors are covered by the following Council Insurance Policies on a 24 hour basis, while discharging the duties of civic office, including attendance at meetings of external bodies as Council's representative.

- Personal Accident Insurance.
- Public Liability Insurance.
- Professional Indemnity Insurance.
- Councillors and Officers Liability Insurance.
- Travel Insurance.

Council will pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim made against a Councillor arising from Council business where any claim is accepted by Council's Insurers, whether defended or not.

### **Legal Costs**

Other than by specific Council resolution or in accordance with a Council policy, any legal expenses incurred by a Councillor shall be the responsibility of that Councillor.

### **Newspapers**

Each Councillor is entitled to have two daily newspapers delivered to their home or City Hall office each day.

### **Publications and Memberships**

Councillors are entitled to be reasonably supplied with journals, magazines and other publications of their choice relevant to their civic duties.

Professional membership fees for Councillors will be paid where there is a benefit in performing their elected roles and portfolio responsibilities.

### **Refreshments for Council Related Meetings**

Where Council Meetings, Briefings or Committee meetings are held at times that extend through normal meal times, Council will provide suitable meals served on the premises.

In circumstances where less than four meals have been requested, the dinner may be cancelled and Councillors will be notified that meals will not be available on site and arrangement made for meals at a suitable nearby venue.

### **Administrative Services**

Council will provide the following support facilities for Councillors. These facilities are provided for use by the Councillor in the conduct of their duties of office. All equipment provided and items purchased shall remain the property of the Council and shall be returned within one month of retirement or termination of office to the Manager, Customer Services and Councillor Support.

#### **Stationery**

Each Councillor will have access to an adequate supply of the following stationery;

- A4 Letterhead (Ref Outward Mail regarding use of Letterhead)
- Business cards
- Name Badge
- Diary, Planner or time manager

#### **Office Equipment**

Upon request a filing cabinet, desk and chair will be available from Council store to establish a home office during the term as a Councillor. Any Councillor wishing to purchase additional furniture or equipment shall do so at their own cost

#### **Secretarial Assistance**

Typing/secretarial assistance will be made available to Councillors for work directly related to the duties of the office. All such work should be co-ordinated through the Office of the Mayor.

#### **Mail Inward**

All mail received by Council is deemed to be Council business and will be opened by Central Records staff. The exception is mail marked 'private and confidential'. Private mail should not be sent via the Council address.

#### **Mail Outward**

Letterhead paper incorporating the Council logo may be used for correspondence. Care must be exercised to ensure that correspondence does not commit Council funds or convey a position contrary to that adopted by Council. Any questions regarding subject correspondence will be forwarded to the Manager Customer Service and Councillor Support for review.

In accordance with Council's EcoChallenge objectives Councillors are encouraged to use electronic forms of communication in preference to hard copy letters delivered via the mail system. Notwithstanding, Councillors may each leave up to 50 standard mail items or equivalent per month cumulative within each financial year for postage through the Australia Post system. Mail must be contained within Council envelopes and co-ordinated through the Manager Customer Service and Councillor Support.

**Courier**

Council will provide a courier service for delivery of Council agenda and other papers to Councillors. In addition, Council will, upon request, provide specific mail boxes at Councillors place of residence, or other location nominated by Councillors, for delivery of such documents.

**Councillors' Lounge**

Councillors' Lounge facilities are available at the Conference and Reception Centre for use by Councillors and their invited guests in the conduct of their duties of office.

**Councillor's Work Area**

A work area will be provided with office furniture, telephone, secure filing cabinet and computer equipment.

**Building Access and Parking**

Each Councillor will receive one electronic key allowing access to the Conference and Reception Centre.

Each Councillor is entitled to use parking space in the City Hall basement or in Police Lane opposite City Hall to enable attendance at meetings or other functions associated with the Councillor's civic role.