

# Councillor Support and Reimbursement of Expenses Policy

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## 1 Document Control

The electronic version of this document is the controlled version. Printed copies are considered uncontrolled. Before using a printed copy, verify that it is the current version.

RESPONSIBLE GENERAL MANAGER	General Manager Corporate Services
POLICY OWNER	Manager Governance
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## 2 Purpose

This policy outlines the resources / support to be provided to Councillors and expenditure that may be claimed in performing their duties as elected representatives of the community as prescribed in Section 75 of the *Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)* "the Act".

## 3 Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors in relation to resources / support and reimbursement of expenditure.

## **4 Policy Details**

### **4.1 Policy Statement**

This policy is a specific requirement of Section 75B(1) of the Act and also serves to provide clear expectations in relation to support and reimbursement of expenses available to Councillors. It seeks to ensure accountability and transparency in relation to expenses claimable by Councillors and meet the minimum requirements provided for in the Guidelines on the provision of facilities and resources support and reimbursement of expenses for Mayors and Councillors as provided by the Minister for Local Government.

### **4.2 Councillor and Mayoral Allowances**

All allowances are paid monthly in advance.

Mayor and Councillor and Mayoral Allowances are taxable income and councillors should put in place their own processes for documenting claimable expenses

Council may unanimously resolve to have tax withheld from Councillor and Mayoral Allowances in accordance with the Order in Council made under section 74B of the Act.

Councillors will be provided an amount equivalent to the superannuation guarantee. This amount may be paid into a superannuation account of the Councillor's choice or it may be taken as an addition to their allowance.

### **4.3 Councillor Resources/Facilities and Support**

Any equipment or resources remain the property of Council and must be returned within 30 days of the expiration of a Councillor's term in office, retirement or resignation.

Resources include all confidential electronic or hardcopy material obtained in a person's capacity as a Councillor.

In order to perform duties and functions as a Councillor the following resources / facilities are provided:

#### **4.3.1 Communication Equipment**

- A desktop or laptop or notebook
- A tablet (currently an iPad)
- A fax/copier/printer machine
- A landline (dual line – phone and fax)
- A mobile phone (currently an iPhone)
- An internet connection

#### **4.3.2 Communication Costs**

Council will meet the reasonable purchase, installation, maintenance and service, connection, subscription, rental and usage (data / calls / text) costs for all Council provided communications equipment.

Each Councillor will be allocated a suitable usage plan for the mobile phone / desktop, laptop or notebook / tablet.

#### **4.3.3 Stationery**

Each Councillor is entitled to the following:

- Stationery including business cards
- Name badges including a name badge for the Mayor's Spouse/Partner if requested
- Personalised letterhead in an electronic template format if requested

Councillors should exercise care to ensure that correspondence on Councillor letterhead does not commit Council funds or convey a position contrary to that adopted by Council or represent that a personal view expressed is that of the Council.

#### **4.3.4 Councillors' Room**

A room is provided in the Cheltenham office for use by Councillors in the conduct of their duties of office.

This includes separate work areas with access to computer equipment, Council Library including copies of major strategies and studies.

Councillor in trays are provided in the Councillors' room. Any contents are cleared and couriered to the Councillors homes each Thursday or Friday evening.

#### **4.3.5 Access Cards**

Each Councillor will be provided with an access card to the Cheltenham offices with business hours access.

There will be 24-hour, seven day a week access to the Council Chamber, Councillors' Room, Mayor's office, Oakleigh Room and Car Park.

#### **4.3.6 Online Presence**

Councillors will be provided with a page on Council's website containing:

- A photo of the Councillor;
- Contact details including details of online channels such as personal webpage, Facebook and twitter accounts;
- Ward map; and
- Council committee memberships.

Officers will support Councillors in establishing and /or maintaining their own social media presence by providing Councillors with social media training.

#### **4.3.7 Health Initiatives**

Councillors will have access to free influenza vaccinations.

#### **4.3.8 Attendance at Civic Functions by Spouse / Partner**

Spouses / partners may attend Council funded civic functions where it is considered necessary or appropriate.

#### **4.4 Resources / Facilities and Support for the Mayor**

##### **4.4.1 Mayoral Vehicle**

A fully maintained vehicle will be provided to the Mayor to assist carrying out duties during the Mayoral term.

##### **4.4.2 Office Space**

A fully equipped office will be provided to the Mayor including communications equipment and meeting facilities.

##### **4.4.3 Secretarial Support**

An appropriate level of secretarial support will be provided to assist the Mayor in undertaking the role effectively.

The level of support will be determined by the CEO in consultation with the Mayor.

##### **4.4.4 Mayoral Gift**

The Mayoral Gift is a token of goodwill from the Council on behalf of the community.

The Mayoral gift shall not exceed a maximum of \$500 per year for each 12-month Mayoral term served and can be either given in the form of a gift or a contribution to a more expensive purchase of the Mayor's choosing.

#### **4.5 Insurance**

In line with section 76A of the Local Government Act, Council is required to take out appropriate public liability and public indemnity insurance for the Mayor and Councillors. This insurance does not cover criminal or wilful acts.

#### **4.6 Councillors with a Disability**

Council may resolve to provide reasonable additional civic support, facilities and equipment for any Councillor with a disability, to enable that Councillor to freely perform their duties.

#### **4.7 Reimbursement of Expenses**

Any requests for reimbursement of expenses outlined in this section requires the completion of a Councillor Expenses Claim Form.

##### **4.7.1 Carer Expenses**

Councillors incurring bona fide child care / family care expenses approved by the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate, will be reimbursed such child care / family care expenses when the child care / family care is necessary in order to allow the Councillor to attend:

- Council meetings and Council related business;
- Council functions; and
- Meetings arising as a result of a Councillor being appointed by the Council to an external body.

Child care expenses relate to the caring of children (up to and including 16 years of age). Carer costs are not eligible for reimbursement for 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.

Reimbursement of child care costs is conditional upon a reasonably hourly rate being charged.

#### **4.7.2 Communication Expenses**

Communication expenses may be incurred by Councillors in relation to the performance of their civic duties.

##### **(a) Council provided landline**

Landlines are provided for Council business use. Personal calls and facsimiles must be minimised, and where significant personal use has occurred, the costs must be reimbursed to Council.

Governance will provide Councillors with copies of their landline accounts on a monthly basis.

##### **(b) Council provided mobile phones and SIM cards**

To ensure all Councillors have access to like 'tools of the trade', it is Council's preferred option that Councillors use the Council provided mobile phones and SIM cards. Council will meet the usage costs of mobile phones with accounts sent directly to Council. Mobile phones are provided for Council business use. Personal calls / texts must be minimised, and where significant personal use has occurred, the costs must be reimbursed to Council.

Governance will provide Councillors with copies of their mobile phone accounts on a monthly basis.

##### **(c) Other mobile phone and phone plan options**

A Councillor may choose to use his / her own private mobile phone and personal SIM card utilising a private mobile phone plan. In this instance a Councillor may seek reimbursement of all Council business related phone calls on the basis of the Councillor declaring on his / her bill the proportion of the calls that relate to Council business. Councillors making claims in respect of privately owned mobile phones shall be given the opportunity of seeking reimbursement of up to 75 per cent of costs outlined in statements

Alternatively, a Councillor may choose to opt for a Council supplied mobile phone using his / her own SIM card and mobile phone plan. Reimbursement will be on the basis of the Councillor declaring on his / her bill the proportion of the phone calls that relate to Council business.

Where a Councillor ceases using his / her own SIM card, Council will pay for the cost associated with transfer to a Council supplied SIM card to ensure portability of data (contacts) occurs, including phone number if requested.

Finally, a Councillor may choose to opt for a Council supplied SIM card to use in his / her private mobile phone in which case bills will be managed in accordance with clause 4.7.2(b) of this Policy.

##### **(d) Internet Plans**

A Councillor may choose to utilise his/her existing internet plan. Reimbursement will be on the basis of the Councillor declaring on his / her bill the proportion of the data plan cost that relates to Council business. Councillors making claims in respect of privately owned internet

plans shall be given the opportunity of seeking reimbursement of up to 75 per cent of costs outlined in statements.

**(e) Car Kits**

**4.7.3 Appropriate hands-free devices will be supplied where requested by a Councillor. Training and Education Expenses**

**(a) Seminars and Conferences**

Councillors attending a conference or seminar relevant to Local Government or the role of a Councillor, are entitled to have paid by Council or reimbursed, the cost of registration, meals, parking, travel (intrastate and interstate – economy class) and accommodation.

**(b) Professional Development**

Upon the commencement of each electoral term, a purpose designed commencement program will be provided to all Councillors.

In addition to the commencement program, upon request from Councillors, in-house governance training facilitated by officers or an external presenter will be arranged.

Council may provide access to external professional development conferences/training on the following topics, subject to the approval processes contained in this Policy:

- Meeting Procedures
- Chairing of Meetings
- Media Training
- Governance Training
- Financial Training
- Team Building and Interpersonal Skills

All professional development expenditure should always be tested against the following criteria:

- Is in the interest of the community;
- Meets the budget determined by Council;
- Clearly offers and promotes public benefit as distinguished from private benefit;
- Is directly relevant to the Councillor's role; and
- Takes place and is able to be utilised during the Councillor's term of office.

**i. Industry Peak Body Provided Professional Development**

Councillors may request to attend professional development conferences/training provided by the following industry peak bodies:

- Australian Local Government Association (ALGA);
- Australian Local Government Womens' Association (ALGWA);
- Victorian State Government;
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) (Note includes AICD Program); and
- Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA).

Council funded attendance at training/conferences provided by the specified industry peak bodies requires Chief Executive Officer approval.

Councillors may apply to the Chief Executive Officer either verbally or in writing.

The monetary value of all approved attendances must be recorded in the quarterly Councillor Allowances and Expenses report on Council's website.

**ii. Non-Industry Peak Body Provided Professional Development**

Councillors may request to attend professional development conferences/training not provided by specified industry peak bodies. However, these requests are subject to a different approval process, given that there may not be a clear association between the provider and the Local Government sector.

Council funded attendance at training/conferences provided by non- industry peak bodies requires Council approval.

Requests must be made by completing an application form and submitting it to the Governance Department. Application forms must contain the following information:

- The conference/training requested to be undertaken;
- The total cost of attendance; and
- How the conference/training meets the criteria set out in the application form.

All application forms received will be attached to a report presented for approval at the next Ordinary Meeting of Council.

The monetary value of all approved attendances must be recorded in the quarterly Councillor Allowances and Expenses report on Council's website.

**4.7.4 Travel Expenses**

**(a) Intrastate/Interstate Travel**

Where travel is by flight the standard form of travel will be economy class.

Councillors using their private motor vehicle to travel to Council related business, including attendance at meetings, conferences and functions and on-site inspections, will be reimbursed petrol/depreciation allowance at the State Government Public Service standard.

Councillors using transport other than their private motor vehicle to travel to meetings, functions and on-site inspections will be reimbursed the cost of such transport.

Myki cards will be made available for Councillor business use.

If it is more cost efficient or practicable for a Councillor to use a pool car than to claim a reimbursement of transport costs, dependent upon availability, a pool car may be made available to a Councillor.

Cabcharge Vouchers/card may be requested for use on Council Business where access to other transport options is not available.

Taxi receipts must be obtained by Councillors to assist with Cabcharge bill reconciliation. Councillors will not be reimbursed for any infringement incurred for road, traffic or parking violations.

**(b) Overseas Travel**

Overseas travel is only to be arranged as a result of Council resolution. Expenses relating to travel, accommodation, meals and reasonable entertainment will be reimbursed in line with the resolution.

#### **4.7.5 Incidental Private Use of Council resources**

It is noted that incidental use of Council resources and facilities may occur from time to time however this should be kept to a minimum.

#### **4.7.6 Legal Expenses**

Other than by specific Council resolution any personal legal expenses incurred by a Councillor shall be the responsibility of that Councillor.

#### **4.7.7 Petty Cash Reimbursements**

Reimbursements via petty cash may be made for transactions less than \$100 with approval from the Manager Governance.

A Councillor Expenses Claim Form must be completed for all petty cash reimbursements with reimbursement to be within three (3) business days.

#### **4.7.8 Other Expenses**

Expenses which do not meet any of the categories contained in clause 4.7 of this Policy may be reimbursed with the approval of the Manager Governance if the expense is:

- Low value;
- One off; or
- An infrequent incidental item/s.

An example of 'other expenses' could be the purchase of computer accessories (such as USBs), parking costs for meetings regarding Council business or stationery.

### **4.8 Procedures**

#### **4.8.1 GST**

When Council procures goods and services, it will normally pay GST. The Council must receive a tax invoice from the supplier to enable it to claim input tax credits for any GST payable. It is therefore important to obtain a tax invoice for any expenses incurred.

#### **4.8.2 Process for Reimbursement**

When a Councillor requires reimbursement of monies, the following procedures must be followed:

- Complete a Councillor Expense Claim Form;
- Obtain a relevant receipt or supporting documentation for the expenditure;
- For reimbursement of private vehicle travel costs, complete a Councillors Travel Expenses Claim Form; and
- Completed forms should be forwarded to the Governance Department.

In an election year, Councillors' should seek to ensure all expenses are up to date prior to the election, and only regular monthly bills such as mobile phone or expenses incurred in the month prior to the election are outstanding.

#### **4.8.3 Publication**

The payment of Councillor expenses (whether paid by directly by Council or reimbursed to the Councillor) will be published in the Annual report, and on the Council's website on a quarterly basis broken down into specific categories as follows:

- Councillor and Mayoral Allowance



- Carer Expenses
- Communication Expenses
- Training and Education Expenses
- Intrastate Travel Expenses
- Overseas and Interstate Travel Expenses
- Other Expenses, as defined in clause 4.7.8 of this Policy.

#### **4.8.4 Expenses Outside the Policy**

Expenses which do not fall within the categories specified in clause 4.8.3 of this Policy will require a Council resolution for reimbursement.

#### **4.9 Human Rights Charter**

This policy has been reviewed against and complies with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

### **5 Related Documents and Resources**

#### **Legislation / External Document**

- *Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)*
- Local Government (Councillor Remuneration Review) Panel Report January 2008
- Report of the Local Government (Councillor Remuneration Review) Panel - Appendix 2 – Guidelines for the reimbursement of expenses and resources and facilities support for Victorian Mayors and Councillors
- Recognition and Support April 2008 - Victorian Local Government Policy Statement on Local Government Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources April 2008.
- Mayor and Councillor Entitlements November 2008 – Information Guide – Reimbursement of expenses and provision of resources and facilities support for Victorian Mayors and Councillors

#### **Internal Document**

- Kingston Councillor Code of Conduct
- Kingston City Council Caretaker Policy
- Councillors' Expenses Claim Form