

Councillor Expenses Reimbursement and Facilities Policy

Local Government Act 2009

1. Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to:

- (a) Provide guidelines for the reimbursement of reasonable business expenses incurred by Councillors while discharging their duties and responsibilities as elected representatives of their local communities.
- (b) Provide guidelines for the provision of facilities necessary to assist Councillors to efficiently and effectively discharge their duties and responsibilities at an appropriate standard.

2. Principles

Council is responsible for providing support to Councillors in carrying out their roles and to fairly compensate Councillors in accordance with statutory requirements and community expectations.

As a general principle, Councillors should not be required to bear additional costs reasonably incurred in the performance of their roles and responsibilities.

This policy ensures that the Council's reimbursement of business expenses and the provision of appropriate facilities is consistent with the local government principles and financial sustainability criteria as defined in the *Local Government Act 2009*. The principles that underpin this policy are:

- The use of public monies in the public interest by responsible budgeting and accounting;
- Fair and reasonable allocation of Council resources (allowances, facilities and other benefits) to enable all Councillors to conduct the duties of their office;
- Transparent decision-making by public disclosure of policy and resolutions; and,
- Accountability for expenditure and use of facilities through full justification and acquittal.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors for the reimbursement of expenses incurred by them, and for the provision of facilities to them, for the purpose of discharging their responsibilities and civic duties.

The provision of facilities will be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

This policy does not provide for salaries or other forms of Councillor remuneration. Councillor remuneration is determined annually by the Local Government Remuneration Commission.

4. Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring this policy is understood and adhered to by all Councillors and relevant workers.

5. Definitions

Budget allocation - means the budget allocation for Councillor expenditure will form part of the Office of the CEO budget. Council will approve the upper limit of funding of all forms of professional development, training and representation of Council and attendance at other forms of conferences, workshops and the like in its annual budget or as determined by resolution from time to time.

Manager - includes persons appointed to positions including the title, Team Manager, General Manager, Principal, Director or Chief.

Council business - means the official business of a Councillor as generally described in section 12 of the *Local Government Act 2009*. Council business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local government area.

**Participating in a community group event or being a representative on a board not associated with Council is not regarded as Council business.

Entertainment and hospitality - means the cost to Council of providing entertainment or hospitality as outlined in Council's Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy.

Facilities - means the amenities and tools necessary for Councillors to perform their duties efficiently and effectively.

Professional development - includes study opportunities, attendance at industry workshops, courses, seminars and conferences that improves a Councillor's skills and knowledge relevant to their responsibilities as Councillor.

Training - means any facilitated learning activity which is considered by Council to be a requirement for Councillors to discharge their duties and responsibilities as Councillors.

Reasonable - means what would be perceived as prudent, responsible and acceptable to the community.

Workers - includes employees, contractors, volunteers and all others who perform work on behalf of Council.

6. Policy - Reimbursements

The Council will reimburse Councillors for expenses as set out in this policy. Any expenses not provided for by this policy will not be reimbursed without express approval from the Council or the Chief Executive Officer.

When considering an application for approval of any matter related to this policy, the Council or the Chief Executive Officer must have regard to any relevant budget allocation.

6.1. Council Business Expenses

Request for reimbursement of expenses will only be considered when the incurred expense is within budget and it can be proven, by the provision of appropriate documentation, that the expense relates to Council-related business incurred whilst undertaking official duties.

Council business includes:

- Preparing, attending and participating in Council meetings, committee meetings, workshops, strategic briefings, deputations and inspections;
- Attending civic functions or civic events to perform official duties or as an official Council representative;
- Attending a community event to represent Townsville City Council;
- The Mayor or representative in an official capacity, representing Council at ordinary meetings, annual general meetings, annual or bi-annual conferences of the North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (NQROC), Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA), Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and any other events as endorsed at any Council meeting. The reasonable expenses incurred by any other Councillor attending these events will be reimbursed only if the Councillor's attendance has been approved by the Council;
- Expenses incurred by a Councillor to obtain a Blue Card (Working with Children check), Criminal History Check, site induction, or similar qualification or certification that are necessary or desirable for a Councillor to perform their duties.

6.2. Professional Development

The Council will reimburse expenses incurred for Council-approved professional development. Council will endeavour to provide Councillors with the opportunity to attend conferences, seminars, courses and workshops within the available budget. A register of Councillor attendance and expenditure at professional development events will be maintained for equity and accountability purposes and made available through a report to Council.

Each year the Council will allocate a budget for Councillor's professional development.

6.3. Training

Attendance at the following annual training programs will be approved as part of the annual budget and includes Councillor induction and orientation programs, the annual Elected Members Update (EMU) program facilitated by the LGAQ, programs facilitated by the Queensland and Australian Governments and the Australian Institute of Company Directors Course most relevant to Local Government. Councillors' individual training budgets will not be debited for these expenses.

Any training programs other than those listed above will require approval from the Council or Chief Executive Officer.

6.4. Intrastate, Interstate and Overseas Travel Expenses

When a Councillor elects to travel intrastate by motor vehicle rather than flying, the Council will provide a reimbursement of the Councillor's vehicle costs in the amount of a single economy

airfare to the destination. This reimbursement will be in addition to the Land Transportation Allowance set out in clause 7.1.

The Council will reimburse intrastate, interstate and overseas travel expenses (e.g. flights, car hire, accommodation, meals) deemed necessary for undertaking Council business and approved professional development.

Councillors must travel via the most direct route, using the most economical and efficient mode of transport. The amount of the reimbursement will be the actual amount expended by the Councillor.

Travel expenses will be debited against the individual Councillor's budget allocation.

6.4.1 Flight Bookings

All Councillor travel approved by Council will be booked and paid for by Council. Economy class is to be used in the first instance although business class travel for a Councillor may be approved by the Council or the Chief Executive Officer when appropriate considering the period of time spent in travel and transit, and when the Councillor is required to commence Council business after arrival.

Airline tickets are not transferable and can only be procured for the Councillor's travel on Council business. They cannot be used to offset other unapproved expenses (e.g. cost of partner accompanying the Councillor).

6.4.2 Travel Transfer Costs - Cab Charge, Public Transport Tickets (Rail, Ferry, Bus)

Councillors will be provided with ferry tickets to Magnetic Island for use when they are required to travel to Magnetic Island to undertake duties relating to the business of Council. Ferry tickets are to be obtained through the Council's Stores Section.

Councillors will be provided with access to a Cabcharge digital pass for use where they are required to travel by taxi to undertake duties relating to the business of Council outside of the Townsville Local Government Area.

Any other travel transfer expenses (e.g. trains, buses and ferry fares) associated with travel will be reimbursed on production of original receipts.

6.4.3 Hire Car or Pool Car

The requirement for a hire car or pool car should be identified at the time of seeking Council approval for travel outside the Townsville Local Government Area and is subject to approval from the Council or Chief Executive Officer. Any subsequent need for a hire car or pool car must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

6.4.4 Accommodation

All Councillor accommodation for Council business will be booked and paid for by Council. Accommodation must be selected that provides:

- Council with the best price value; and
- Convenient to the conference/meeting.

When attending conferences, Councillors must take advantage of (any cost savings available from) any package provided by conference organisers and, therefore, stay in the recommended accommodation unless prior approval has been granted by Council.

Council or the Chief Executive Officer may approve alternative accommodation arrangements taking into account the total costs, location, value for money, convenience and traveller safety.

In determining accommodation locations and standards for all Councillors, every effort will be made to minimise the total cost associated with attendance at the event. Travel time to the event, taxi costs, convenience and hotel services will be considered when booking accommodation. When practical and available, accommodation will be arranged within close proximity to the event venue.

One night's accommodation prior to the event will be approved only when travel to the event on the day of commencement is not practical. One night's accommodation after the conclusion of the event will only be approved when travel from the event on the day of the commencement is not practical (including because of safety concerns or restrictions upon travel options).

All expenses incurred at the accommodation venue other than accommodation and meals must be settled at the time of departure. It is the Councillor's responsibility to seek reimbursement of allowable expenses upon return (see 6.4.7 for exclusions). Reimbursement must be sought using a payment request form and will not be approved without a tax invoice that proves the expense was incurred.

6.4.5 Meals

Councillor will be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals, associated with official business, when:

- The Councillor incurs the cost personally;
- The meal was not provided within the registration costs of the approved activity/event/travel;
- The Councillor can produce original documents sufficient to verify the actual meal cost; and,
- The expenses are reasonable.

If a Councillor cannot produce a receipt for a meal they have purchased then a statutory declaration must be completed to claim the reimbursement.

No alcohol will be paid for by Council.

6.4.6 Incidental Expenses for Overnight Travel

Councillors will be reimbursed for incidental items necessary for travel.

Incidental expenses will be reimbursed to Councillors after the event on receipt of original requests.

6.4.7 Excluded Travel Reimbursements

Any costs incurred which are deemed to be of a personal nature are required to be paid for by the Councillor from private funds. Examples (not exhaustive) of what is considered personal expenditure include:

- Mini bar purchases
- Alcoholic beverages

- Entertainment not part of a conference package (e.g. Tourism related costs, social events, Inflight and in-house movies)
- Meals, entertainment or travel costs for spouse, partner, family members or friends
- Airline club fees
- Infringements (e.g. traffic/parking fines)
- Airport security confiscated items
- Additional cleaning expenses (e.g. smoking in a room cleaning fee or damages)

6.4.8 Travel Insurance

Council has travel insurance arrangements in place that cover all Councillors on authorised Council business, conferences and courses, etc. Full policy details can be obtained from Financial Services.

6.5. Hospitality Expenses

Councillors will be reimbursed hospitality expenses deemed necessary in the conduct of Council business and in accordance with the allocated annual budget.

All claims for entertainment and hospitality expenses reimbursement must be in accordance with Council's Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy.

6.6. Communication Expenses

Council will provide telecommunications facilities as set out in 7.2. All other communication expenses will be reimbursed as set out in Council's Advertising Spending Policy.

7. Policy - Facilities

Council is responsible for the provision of appropriate administrative support and resources to ensure that a Councillor is able to undertake their civic duties efficiently and at a standard appropriate to fulfil their professional role for the community. The provision of facilities and resources is for the sole use of Councillors in undertaking their duties and should be used responsibly and appropriately.

7.1. Land Transportation Allowance

A transportation allowance will be provided to Councillors for the costs of land-transport while undertaking the duties of a Councillor.

A transportation allowance will be automatically provided by weekly payment to cover the costs of procuring, maintaining, and running (including but not limited to fuel, registration, insurance repairs, depreciation, finance costs, etc.) a vehicle and/or the cost of other transportation options including taxis, ride share, public transport and active transportation equipment.

For the 2024/28 Council term, the annual transportation allowance will be:

- \$24,500 for Councillors; and

- \$27,000 for the Mayor, having regard to the additional civic duties and responsibilities of the Mayor's role.

Councillors will have access to Council's preferred salary packaging provider. Each Councillor is responsible for determining the suitability of salary packaging for their individual circumstances.

Councillors must seek their own independent financial and tax advice regarding this allowance and any potential taxation implications.

7.2. General Facilities

The Council will provide the Mayor and Councillors with facilities as set out in Schedule A of this Policy.

Councillors will be provided with facilities that enable them to discharge their responsibilities as a Councillor. All facilities provided to Councillors remain the property of Council (unless otherwise stated) and must be returned when a Councillor's term of office expires.

8. Accountability

Council is accountable to the community in regard to compliance with this policy. Details are reported in Council's Annual Report and will include:

- The provision of copies of Council resolutions resolving to reimburse expenses to Councillors;
- The provision of copies of Council resolutions resolving to provide facilities to Councillors;
- A copy of this policy;
- The amount of expenses (including conferences and seminars, travel, advertising, meals and hospitality) incurred by each individual Councillor;
- Details of any overseas travel including Councillor names, dates of travel, destination, purpose and all associated costs; and,
- The facilities provided to each Councillor.

Travel to be booked through Council's contracted travel provider unless approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

A quarterly report will be provided to Council detailing expenses in each of the categories that have been reimbursed.

9. Legal Parameters

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulation 2012

10. Associated Documents

Advertising Spending Policy Community Engagement Policy

Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy

Travel Procedures - Council Officers

Electronic version current uncontrolled copy valid only at time of printing.

Document No. - 23627985

Authorised by - Chief Executive Officer

Document Maintained by - Legal Services

Legal Services Councillor Expenses Reimbursement and Facilities Policy

Version No. 1

Initial Date of Adoption (Version No. 1) - 23.04.24

Current Version Reviewed - 23.04.24

Next Review Date - 23.04.28

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Expense Claim Reconciliation Form
FBT Record Keeping and Reporting Guidelines

Schedule A

Facilities supplied	Supplied to	Items/Services supplied	Conditions of supply
Personal protective equipment	Mayor and Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety helmet • Boots • Vest • Eye protection • Hearing protection • Any other item of PPE approved by the CEO on the basis that it is required before a Councillor may attend a Council work site. 	<p>Items do not need to be returned to Council at the end of a Councillor's term.</p> <p>Must be worn on all construction site inspections as arranged by Council and any other occasion when it is prudent to wear PPE.</p> <p><i>Note: site induction may be required prior to entry onto construction sites</i></p>
Stationery supplies	Mayor and Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalised letterhead • Business cards • With compliments slips • Door knocking slips • Name badge • Council email address • Council Facebook address 	<p><i>Note: All correspondence reflecting the view of Council (and not the individual Councillor) must be written by Council officers, classified as Council correspondence and must be recorded in Council's record management systems.</i></p>
Full administrative support and office facilities	Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative support • Office • Executive Assistant • Councillor Advisors as resolved by the Council 	<p><i>Note: The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementing the organisation structure required to allow the provision of full administrative support to the Mayor.</i></p>
Full administrative support and office facilities	Deputy Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative support • Office • Executive Assistant 	<p><i>Note: The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementing the organisation structure required to allow the provision of full administrative support to the Deputy Mayor.</i></p>

Facilities supplied	Supplied to	Items/Services supplied	Conditions of supply
Limited administrative support	Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diary management including the management of attendance at functions • Coordination and distribution of Councillor information • Monitoring and reporting Councillor expense accounts • Provision and oversight of Councillor correspondence and information requests • Coordination of Councillor travel, training and professional development and registering all Council records into Council's Document Management System. • Assistance to book meeting rooms and/or office space. • Coordination of media opportunities, production of promotional collateral items, community events and activities in conjunction with Council's operations. 	<i>Note: The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementing the organisation structure required to allow the provision of limited administrative support to the Councillors.</i>
Telecommunication facilities	Mayor and Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile telephone (of a similar standard as those provided to Council's senior management) • Wireless Internet connection • Noting the Mayor's ongoing responsibility to lead the Council and the Mayor's role as Chair of the Local Disaster Management Group - the costs of providing International Roaming facility for the Mayor's telecommunication device/s or an alternate phone with international connection for the duration of travel. • The costs of providing International Roaming 	

Facilities supplied	Supplied to	Items/Services supplied	Conditions of supply
		facility for a Councillor's mobile telephone, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • or an alternate arrangement when the Mayor approves that facility as being necessary for the effective conduct of Council business and the need for the facility arises from the Councillor travelling on Council business. 	
Shared office facilities	All Councillors (except the Mayor and Deputy Mayor)	Shared office facilities at Walker Street, Townsville consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor shared offices (subject to availability) • Councillor meeting room • Docking station for 2-in-1 device, screens, keyboard and mouse, and broadband internet connectivity (including wireless connectivity) • Access to office, printers and scanners; and • Off-street parking 	
Home office facilities	Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laptop with docking station and internet connection • Multi-function printer/scanner machine • Screen, keyboard and mouse (if requested) 	