

Policy



STATUTORY

EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT & PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR COUNCILLORS

Head of Power

Section 250 – *Local Government Regulation 2012*

Key Supporting Council Document

Lockyer Valley Regional Council Corporate Plan (2022-2027)

- Compliance with governance obligations
- Development of policies that provide clear direction based on the mission and outcomes articulated in the Corporate Plan.

Definitions

<i>Council Business Activities</i>	Conducted on behalf of, and approved by, Council where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve business objectives for the Council. Council business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local community.
<i>Facility</i>	A tool of trade provided by Council to Councillors to enable them to perform their duties at a standard appropriate to fulfil their role for the community.
<i>Expenses</i>	Payments made by Council to reimburse Councillors for their reasonable expenses incurred or to be incurred when discharging their duties as Councillors. These payments are not regarded as remuneration.
<i>CEO</i>	Chief Executive Officer

Policy Objective

This Policy will ensure accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors. This policy will also ensure that elected members are provided with reasonable facilities to assist them in carrying out their civic duties.

Policy Statement

Council authorises the:

- payment of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by Councillors; and
- provision of facilities, including administrative support staff to assist Councillors in discharging their duties and responsibilities.

When Councillors have special needs or suffer from some form of impairment, the special access and equity needs of the Councillor may result in the provision of modified furniture, voice activated software, larger computer monitors, or other variations to this policy as required.

This policy deals with reimbursement of expenses or provision of a facility to Councillors; but does not apply to the conduct of Civic Functions or the remuneration of Councillors.

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Expenses must only be for the actual cost of legitimate business use, not to derive any private benefit and be only in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* and the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

Council is committed to ensuring that Councillors are provided with the facilities required to enable them to perform their duties.

The payment and/or reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities for Councillors:

- is to be open and transparent, prudent, responsible, acceptable to the community and in accordance with statutory requirements;
- based on ensuring economy and efficiency; and
- subject to budget provisions.

Approval and Reporting

Council has delegated approval of all expenses for the Mayor and Councillors to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO must approve all mandatory and discretionary training, travel and accommodation for the Mayor and Councillors. The approval of Council is required for attendance by Councillors at any training or conference in Australia and for attendance by a Councillor at any event as a delegate or representative of Council. Council approval by resolution is required for the attendance and travel by the Mayor or Councillors to any training, conference or event outside Australia.

Claiming Expenses Associated with Approval Activities

Expenses

The following expenses refer to actual expenses deemed necessary for Council business. Where possible, all approved expenditure shall be covered by council corporate card, thereby eliminating the need for reimbursement.

Councillors are only entitled to reimbursement of the expenses contained in the categories listed below:

Professional Development

Mandatory Training:

Councillors must attend training where Council approves that all councillors or a class of councillors (e.g. newly elected) are to attend training courses or workshops for skill development related to a Councillor's role. Council will meet all costs.

Discretionary Training:

Where a Councillor wishes to attend a conference, workshop or training to improve skills relevant to their role as a Councillor other than mandatory training, Council approval is required. Council will meet all costs.

Travel and Accommodation Costs

All approved Councillor travel and accommodation costs will be booked and paid for by Council. Economy class is to be used where possible, although business class may be considered for travel outside of Australia.

Travel expenses which will not be included:

- In-flight & in-house movies or pay per view
- Mini bar purchases
- Entertainment
- Personal items or services
- Personal Excess luggage costs
- Airline lounge, club or frequent flyer membership fees without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer/Mayor.

Accommodation will be booked taking into consideration availability, cost and proximity to business appointments. Wherever practicable, accommodation shall be appropriately priced 4 star accommodation or equivalent.

Meals

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for meal expenses incurred when travelling and/or attending Council business outside the region. Expenses up to a maximum of \$30 for breakfast, \$30 for lunch and \$50 for dinner will be reimbursed. The Councillor must incur the cost personally and produce a valid tax invoice. A meal must not have been provided as part of the event, during a flight or as a part of an accommodation package.

Hospitality Expenses

Councillors are entitled an allowance (\$1500 for Councillors and \$5,000 for the Mayor per year) to entertain dignitaries, constituents and guests. This allowance will be paid in fortnightly instalments.

Councillors are not entitled to be reimbursed or provided with funds for the purchase of alcoholic beverages without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer/Mayor.

Cab Charge and Public Transport

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for transfer costs associated with travelling for Council business e.g. rail, ferry, bus, cab etc.

Events

Where Councillors attend events which constitute council business and partners are included on the invitation, Council will pay expenses associated with the partner's attendance in accordance with this guideline. However, if the partner is not included on the invitation received by the Councillor, payment of expenses associated with the attendance of the partner at the event will be the responsibility of the Councillor.

Facilities

Administrative Tools and Office Amenities

Councillors are entitled to use the following facilities:

- Administrative support – the Mayor and Councillors are provided with access to a full time administrative support officer.
- Laptop and/or tablet and smart phone
- Access to publications including legislation required to undertake the duties of a Councillor
- Office space and access to office facilities and equipment via administrative support officer.

Maintenance Costs of any Council Owned Equipment

Council will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and reasonable wear and tear costs of Council-owned equipment that is supplied to Councillors for official business use.

Uniforms, Name Badge and Building Access Tag

Councillors will be entitled to receive a building access tag, name badge and all necessary safety equipment (to the standard supplied to employees). Councillors will be issued with a jacket or blazer and tie as appropriate and as required.

Personal Protective Equipment will be issued to Councillors as required for on-site visits.

Motor Vehicles

The Mayor will be provided with a fully maintained motor vehicle of appropriate standard for use on Council business and for private purposes. Council will meet all operating costs and provide fuel cards for the Mayor's Council-owned vehicle.

Councillors are entitled to an allowance per annum (paid fortnightly) to cover the cost of fuel and other expenses (including depreciation) for the private vehicle of the councillor:

- Deputy Mayor \$22,500
- Councillor \$20,000

In extraordinary circumstances where a Councillor's private vehicle is not available for the Councillor to undertake Council business, a Council car pool vehicle may be made available at the discretion of the CEO.

Legal Costs and insurance cover

Council has included Councillors in its Workers Compensation coverage (Local Government Self Insurance Scheme – LGW) that provides for a level of benefits substantially the same as for an employee, with the exception that elected members cannot bring a common law damages action against Council under the *Worker's Compensation & Rehabilitation Act 2003*.

Council has included Councillors under its Professional Indemnity Policy (Local Government Mutual – LGM).

Credit card

The Mayor will be provided with a corporate credit card for use in charging costs and expenses associated with the duties of Mayor.

Allowances whilst on leave

Councillors will continue to receive allowances whilst on approved leave.

Claims and Reports

All claims for reimbursement of expenses are to be made on a Reimbursement Claim Form and submitted with original receipts and tax invoices. Claims are to be made within three months of incurring the expense. Claims will be paid on a monthly basis. Councillors are to accept full responsibility for the accuracy of each claim.

Human Rights

Council is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights. Council has an obligation under the *Human Right Act 2019* to give proper consideration to human rights when making a decision, and to act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights. To the extent that an act or decision under this policy may engage human rights, Council will have regard to the *Human Rights Act 2019* in undertaking the act or making the decision.

Related Documents

Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy
Councillor Code of Conduct