

GOVERNANCE – COUNCILLOR EXPENSES POLICY

Date Adopted:	14 February 2018
Adopted By:	Council
Review Due:	2020
Responsible Officer:	Governance Coordinator
RM8 No:	D/18/7329

PURPOSE

This Policy supports the requirements of the Act in relation to payment of allowances and reimbursement of expenses for Councillors. It provides an overview of how Council provides resources and training to its Councillors to ensure they can carry out their functions and duties.

This Policy provides guidelines for Councillors in relation to:

- Councillor Allowances;
- Resources provided by Council;
- Reimbursement of Expenses; and
- Training and Conferences.

DEFINITIONS

The Act	means the Local Government Act 1989
CEO	means the Chief Executive Officer
CEO's EA	means the Chief Executive Officer's Executive Assistant.
CEO's Office	includes the CEO, the CEO's EA, the Council Support Officer and the Governance Coordinator
Training and Conferences	includes all training, conferences, events, functions, seminars etc.

APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Councillors elected to the Southern Grampians Shire Council.

Expenditure should always be in the interests of the Southern Grampians Shire community and is allocated from Council's annual budget.

Claims for any expenditure not included in this Policy will be subject to a Council resolution.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- Receipts/invoices must be provided for any expenses which are being claimed. Failure to produce a receipt/invoice may result in the expense not being reimbursed.
- Receipts/invoices must be itemised and contain relevant information about the expense. EFTPOS receipts/invoices with just a price are not acceptable.
- All reimbursements will be paid in arrears.
- If a Councillor does not claim a particular expense or use a particular resource the budget allocation cannot be rolled over into the next financial year.
- Requests for reimbursement should be received within 60 days of the cost being incurred. Claims for expenses six months or older will not be reimbursed. All claims must be made by 7 July to ensure that they are paid in the correct financial year.

COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES

The Act provides for Mayors and Councillors to be paid an allowance. These allowances are fixed by Orders in Council on an annual basis. These allowances are usually fixed in a price range or with a maximum allowance.

Council must review and determine the level of allowances within 6 months of a General Election.

Allowances shall be paid monthly 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 will be made by electronic funds transfer into the Councillor's nominated bank account.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Mayoral Car

Council will make available at its cost to the Mayor a fully registered, insured, maintained and fuelled vehicle for use by the Mayor as required to carry out all duties. The vehicle type and usage shall be in accordance with Council's Motor Vehicle Usage Policy and Sustainable Motor Vehicle Procurement Policy.

Mayoral Office

A private office suitably equipped with quality furniture and shelving, including a desk and meeting area will be made available to the Mayor.

Corporate Card

A Corporate Card will be made available to the Mayor for use while discharging the functions of the office. Use of the Corporate Card must be in accordance with Council's policies.

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Councillors will be provided with mobile phones and tablet computers. These devices are to be used for official Council business only. Council will pay all connection fees, rental charges and all Council business call and data charges. Any costs in relation to private use of these devices will be reimbursed to Council by the relevant Councillor.

All items must be returned to Council within 30 days of the conclusion of the term of office.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Stationery

The Council shall, upon request, provide Councillors with standard stationery held or obtained generally for the organisation's requirements.

This stationery may include:

- Business cards;
- Name badges;
- Writing pads/notebooks;
- Pens; and
- Diaries and planners.

Mail Inward

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

The following provides the basis for how external invitations are received and managed:

- Upon receiving invitations the CEO's Office will distribute invitations and the relevant particulars as specified in the invitation.
- If Councillors advise the CEO's Office that they will be attending an event, the event will be put into the Councillors electronic calendar.
- Invitations addressed to the Mayor will be referred to the Mayor for acceptance. If the Mayor is unable to attend other Councillors will be given the opportunity to attend. The invitation will be discussed at the next Briefing Session of Council, or sent via email if urgent.

Apparel

The Council shall, upon request, lend Councillors protective clothing required to assist in carrying out the duties of office. This clothing is to be returned promptly upon the completion of the activity for which the clothing was required.

This clothing shall be limited to high visibility vests, wet weather pants and pullovers, gumboots, winter jackets and/or hats, as may be held in the store to meet the organisation's requirements.

Return of Resources

All resources provided to Councillors are provided for use by the Councillor in the conduct of their duties of office. All equipment provided and items purchased shall be returned within one month of the retirement or termination of office.

TRAVEL EXPENSES

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses for attendance at:

- Ordinary and Special Council Meetings, Briefing Sessions of the Council and Committee Meetings of the Council;
- Official Council Functions;
- Meetings arising as a result of a Councillor being appointed by the Council to an external body;
- Training or conferences the Councillor is attending which Council has paid for; and
- Other meetings, events or occasions as agreed by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer from time to time, or by resolution of the Council.

All Councillor travel should be undertaken utilising the most direct route and the most practicable and economical mode of transport. When travelling interstate the mode of transport is to be the most cost effective form of transport. All air travel will be in economy class. The transport options to be utilised in priority order is:

1. Public transport
2. Car pooling with Council vehicles
3. Council pool vehicle
4. Car pooling with private vehicles
5. Private vehicle

The Mayoral car may also be available by agreement between the Mayor and Councillor/s as a further option.

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.

Travel claims will be from the Councillors notified place of normal residence.

Costs relating to private vehicle use will be reimbursed where it is a necessary Council expense incurred while performing duties as a Councillor. The maximum allowance travel rate will be as set by the Australian Taxation Office.

Council will cover the travel expenses in relation to travel via public transportation, including air travel. Where possible this travel should be booked in advance and paid for by Council.

Expenses will be reimbursed to Councillors following receipt of a completed Councillor Claim for Travel Expenses Form.

Parking

Council will reimburse Councillors for parking when required. Expenses will be reimbursed to Councillors following receipt of a completed Councillor Claim for Reimbursement of Expenses Form, together with the relevant receipts/invoices.

CHILD CARE EXPENSES

The Council will reimburse the cost of necessary child care expenses for children up to and including 16 years of age while a Councillor is conducting Council business.

Child care expenses 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.

Each child care expense claimed shall be substantiated by a receipt from the caregiver showing the dates and times care was provided, and the Councillor shall provide the reason why the care was required on each occasion.

Child Care Expenses will be reimbursed for attendance at:

- Ordinary and Special Council Meetings, Briefing Sessions of the Council and Committee Meetings of the Council;
- Official Council Functions;
- Meetings arising as a result of a Councillor being appointed by the Council to an external body;
- Training or conferences the Councillor is attending which Council has paid for; and
- Other meetings, events or occasions as agreed by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer from time to time, or by resolution of the Council.

Expenses will be reimbursed to Councillors following receipt of a completed Councillor Claim for Reimbursement of Expenses Form, together with the relevant receipts/invoices.

TRAINING AND CONFERENCES

Each Councillor will have an individual budget to attend training and conferences during the financial year. This budget will be set annually by Council through its annual budget process. This budget allocation will not be held over from one financial year to the next if not fully expended. Once a Councillor budget allocation has run out, Councillors can still attend training and conferences at their own expense.

A Councillor who is funded by Council to attend a conference or training shall participate as a representative of Council, not as an individual.

All attendance at training and conferences shall be booked through the CEO's office, following approval by the Mayor utilising the attached approval form.

Costs associated with the training, conferences and seminars shall be separately disclosed for and include items such as travel costs, meals, accommodation etc. Separate ledgers exist for each of these items.

Reporting on Training and Conferences

Within two months of attending training or a conference, Councillors shall present a written report to the other Councillors about the key points of the training or conference.

Councillor Induction

Any Councillor Induction training provided to Councillors following elections will be fully funded by Council, it will not be paid for out of individual Councillor's training and conference budgets.

Attendance by the Mayor at Events

Council recognises that the role of the Mayor carries the expectation that the incumbent will represent Council at events, sometimes at short notice. Therefore, the budget set to attend training and conferences does not apply to attendances at any activities specific to the role of Mayor, or any Councillor attending on behalf of the Mayor.

ALGA and MAV

The Mayor and CEO will attempt to regularly participate in the following local government events. The budget set to attend training and conferences does not apply to attendance at these events.

- Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly
- MAV Annual Session
- MAV Plenary Session

Procedure for Approval

The Mayor will approve Councillor attendance at training and conferences. Attendance at training and conferences will only be approved where:

- The event provides an opportunity to receive or upgrade relevant training and skills related to the role of a Councillor;
- The event provides the opportunity to learn key information about an issue of public policy related to the Southern Grampians Shire community; or
- The event has the potential to foster broad economic development opportunities with the Southern Grampians Shire.

Where multiple Councillors wish to attend the same event priority may be given to the Councillor who has been appointed as the Council Representative through the Council Delegated Committees process, if applicable.

Where Councillors wish to attend training or conferences which do not meet the above approval requirements they may do so, but the Councillor will be responsible for covering all the expenses in relation to attending the event and will not be reimbursed by Council.

There must be sufficient funds available in the Councillors individual training and conferences budget to cover the cost of the Councillor attending the event.

The Councillor Application to Attend Training or Conference Form, attached to this Policy, must be completed by the Councillor and forwarded to the Mayor for approval. Once approved the CEO office staff will book the training or conference for the Councillor. No training or conference, or accompanying accommodation, will be booked without approval from the Mayor.

Registration Fees

Registration fees for training and conferences will be paid by Council.

Accommodation

Where overnight accommodation is required Council will provide accommodation to a maximum value as listed below:

Capital cities	up to \$280.00 per night
Regional centres	up to \$200.00 per night

Accommodation will be arranged to achieve the best value for Council, with breakfast and parking being included wherever possible. The CEO's office will book the accommodation upon receipt of an approved Councillor Application to Attend Training or Conference Form.

Should Councillors elect to stay at accommodation that is more expensive, Council will only cover costs to the value listed above.

Meals

When a Councillor is attending training and conferences Council will reimburse the maximum following provisions in relation to meals unless there is a set meal cost included in the training or conference package, in which case Council will pay that higher cost. Meal costs includes beverage costs such as coffee and alcohol. Meal reimbursements will be at the rate set by the Australian Tax Office. The current amount is set in TD 2017/19 and is as follows:

	City	Country
Breakfast	\$27.05	\$24.25
Lunch	\$30.45	\$27.65
Dinner	\$51.85	\$47.70

Incidental costs such as snacks, coffee or alcohol will not be covered by Council unless included as part of a meal as stipulated above.

Should Councillors elect to consume meals that are more expensive, Council will only cover costs to the value listed above.

Accompanying partners/guests

Any additional attendances fees, accommodation costs, meal costs, or any other costs incurred as a result of the attendance of partners and/or children shall be borne by the Councillor.

Refreshments (mini-bar)

All mini-bar accounts are the responsibility of the Councillor.

Other accommodation costs

Unless otherwise approved, in-room movie charges and dry-cleaning/laundry costs will not be reimbursed to a Councillor or paid for by Council.

Reimbursement of Expenses

Expenses will be reimbursed to Councillors following receipt of a completed Councillor Claim for Reimbursement of Expenses Form, together with the relevant receipts/invoices.

INSURANCE

Councillors are covered by the following Council Insurance Policies while involved in official Council Business, including attendance at meetings of external bodies as Council's representative:

- Personal Accident Insurance;
- Public Liability Insurance;
- Professional Indemnity Insurance;
- Councillors and Officer Liability Insurance;
- Travel Insurance; and
- WorkCover (as a deemed employee).

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.

REPORTING ON EXPENDITURE

The CEO shall ensure that any reporting of Councillor expenses and travel as required by the Act or any other legislation or regulations is completed.

Expenditure will be provided individually to Councillors quarterly at briefing sessions. Full year expenditure will be published in the Annual Report using Councillor names and the below categories:

- Allowance
- Superannuation
- Travel – Meetings
- Travel – Training and Conferences
- Travel – Events
- Travel – Other
- Child Care
- Training and Conferences
- Total Expenditure

IMPLEMENTATION

This Policy will be published on Council's website and a copy provided to all Councillors.

REVIEW

This Policy must be reviewed a minimum of once every 4 years, or in line with legislative changes.



COUNCILLOR APPLICATION TO ATTEND TRAINING OR CONFERENCE

Councillor:

TRAINING OR CONFERENCE DETAILS

Title of Training/Conference:			
Training/Conference Provider:			
Training/Conference Duration: (number of days)			
Date/s of Training/Conference:	From:		To:
Cost of Training/Conference:			
Location of Training/Conference:			
Accommodation Required?			
Benefit to Council: <i>(Please tick relevant benefit/s below)</i>			
The event provides an opportunity to receive or upgrade relevant training and skills related to the role of a Councillor.			
The event provides the opportunity to learn key information about an issue of public policy related to the Southern Grampians Shire community.			
The event has the potential to foster broad economic development opportunities with the Southern Grampians Shire.			

Please attach details of training or conference where possible.

I certify that the above expenses have been incurred in accordance with the Councillor Expenses Policy.

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Signature of Councillor

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Approved by Mayor

<p>Office Use Only</p> <p>Ledger Account:</p>
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