



COUNCILLORS' EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT AND PROVISION OF FACILITIES

Corporate Plan Reference:	<i>Excellence as a Council</i>
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Policy Author:	Director Executive Services

POLICY BACKGROUND

The purpose of this policy is to set the parameters to authorise payment of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by Councillors; and provide facilities including administrative support to assist Councillors to discharge their duties and responsibilities having regard to local circumstances.

This policy aims to ensure accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred by the Mayor and Councillors.

This policy is aligned to the principles underpinning the *Local Government Act 2009* (the Act), that is:

- Transparent and effective processes and decision-making in the public interest;
- Good governance of, and by, local government; and
- Ethical and legal behaviour of Councillors and local government employees.

This Policy applies to the Mayor and Councillors and is made pursuant to section 250 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*.

Definitions

Council Business shall mean official business conducted on behalf of Council, where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve Council objectives, for example, attend official Council meetings, Councillor forums and workshops, formal professional development training relevant to Councillor responsibilities, Committees/Boards as Council's official representative, and scheduled meetings relating to Council appointments.

Council Business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local community, for example, this includes but is not limited to:

- Preparing, attending and participating in Council meetings, Committee meetings, workshops, strategic briefings, deputations and inspections;
- Investigating issues/complaints regarding Council services raised by residents/ ratepayers/ visitors to the Council area;
- Undertaking approved professional development opportunities;
- Attending civic functions or events;
- Attending public/community meetings, presentation dinners, annual general meetings where invited as a Councillor;
- Attending a community event (e.g. school fete, community group awards and presentations, fundraisers) where a formal invitation has been received.

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

Councillors shall mean the Mayor and Councillors unless otherwise stated.

Expense shall mean 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. The expenses may be either reimbursed to Councillors or paid direct by Council for something that is deemed a necessary cost or charge when on Council business.

Facility shall mean the 'tools of trade' provided by Council, required to enable Councillors to perform their duties with relative ease and at a standard appropriate to fulfil their professional role for the community.

Hospitality expense is defined in Council's Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy as reasonable costs associated with entertaining visitors (where Council has an interest in, or a specific obligation towards, facilitating the visit).

Professional Development shall mean attendance by a Councillor at an event where the Councillor expects to develop further skills and knowledge relevant to their role as a Councillor.

Representation shall mean attendance by a Councillor at various community and special interest representative group meetings and events, which are relevant to the role of Councillor.

Reasonable shall mean the application of sound judgement and consideration of what is prudent, responsible and acceptable to the community when determining levels of facilities and expenditure.

COUNCIL POLICY

1 General Entitlement

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed reasonable expenses incurred while undertaking Council business and to be provided with appropriate facilities to assist them in undertaking their duties. A budget will be allocated each financial year for reasonable expenses to be incurred in accordance with this policy.

2 Professional Development & Representation

Councillors are encouraged to undertake relevant professional development as defined by this Policy.

Council will reimburse or be responsible for the cost of reasonable expenses incurred for:

- Mandatory professional development & representation; and/or
- Discretionary professional development & representation deemed essential for the Councillor's role.

Any professional development & representation requiring overseas travel requires a formal Council resolution.

2.1 Mandatory Professional Development & Representation

Noosa Council will reimburse or cover expenses incurred for the following activities:

- Attendance of three delegates at the LGAQ (Local Government Association Queensland) Annual Conference: The Mayor (or the Mayor's Nominee Councillor) as the primary delegate and two Councillors as secondary delegates;
- Attendance of the Mayor at the ALGA (Australian Local Government Association) Annual Conference and any other ALGA relevant conferences/seminars/workshops;
- Workshops, courses, seminars, conferences, and meetings that are important to the role of a Councillor where approval to attend is obtained via Council resolution or granted by the Mayor for Councillors other than the Mayor, or by the CEO for the Mayor.

Council will reimburse expenses e.g. flights, motor vehicle, parking costs, accommodation, meals and associated registration fees, deemed reasonable and necessary to achieve the business of Council where:

- A Councillor is an official representative of Council; and
- The activity/event and travel has been endorsed by resolution of Council, or by the Mayor for Councillors other than the Mayor, and by the CEO for the Mayor.

2.2 Discretionary Professional Development & Representation

Each Councillor can attend, at their discretion, meetings, workshops, courses, seminars and conferences that improve their skills or which are relevant to the role of Councillor. This will generally be limited to \$2,500 per year for the quadrennial term of office. However, any amount underspent below the \$2,500 per year budget within a particular financial year will be budgeted for use during the next financial year in addition to the annual \$2,500 limit. There is no transfer permitted between Councillors and no carry forward option beyond one year.

There is no requirement for a Council resolution to approve these attendances. Council will pay for or reimburse expenses e.g. transport costs (such as flights, taxis, vehicle hire, and parking), accommodation, meals and associated registration fees, deemed reasonable and necessary.

For reimbursement, the Councillor must submit details to the Chief Executive Officer prior to attending and provide all relevant documentation within 14 days of attending the event to ensure reimbursement of expenses.

Details/Conditions for travel under Section 2

Travel

Approval for such travel as noted above is subject to the following conditions:

- Where possible all travel by Councillors will be booked and paid for by Council in advance;
- Travel is to be undertaken by the most direct route;
- Travel tickets are not transferrable;
- Requests for travel should be made in sufficient time to take advantage of discounts and gain access to the widest range of flights;
- Economy class travel is the standard, unless otherwise approved;
- Any fine issued whilst undertaking Council business is the responsibility of the Councillor incurring the fine;
- Travel insurance is provided for all Councillors on Council business.

Meals when travelling for Council business

The reimbursement of meal costs of Councillors when travelling on Council business may be made using one of the two methods below:

Method 1 - Council will reimburse the reasonable cost of meals where a Councillor:

- Incurs the cost personally; and
- Is not provided with a meal within the registration costs of the approved activity/event; and
- Produces a valid tax invoice.

Method 2 - If a Councillor is unable to produce a tax invoice and seeks reimbursement for meals while attending official Council business, he/she may claim up to the maximum meal allowance in accordance the Australian Tax Office (ATO) standards.

Expenses relating to the consumption of alcohol will not be reimbursed.

Accommodation

Councillors may need to stay away from home overnight while attending to Council business. All accommodation associated with Council business will be booked and paid for by Council.

When attending conferences, Councillors should try to take advantage of the package provided by conference organisers (if offered and applicable) and therefore stay in the recommended accommodation subject to availability. Otherwise, suitable accommodation will be sought within a reasonable distance to the venue in which the Councillor is to attend.

Overnight accommodation will be reimbursed when a Councillor is unexpectedly required to stay outside the Sunshine Coast Region and it is unreasonable to expect the Councillor to return home for the night (accommodation selected should be of a reasonable standard and appropriately priced).

3 Hospitality

Councillors may have occasion to incur hospitality expenses while conducting Council business, apart from civic receptions organised by Council. The Mayor may particularly require additional reimbursement when entertaining dignitaries outside of official events.

To allow for this expense, the following amounts can be claimed:

- Councillors up to \$500 per annum
- Mayor up to \$5,000 per annum

To claim, the Mayor or Councillor must provide a written statement of whom they entertained and an indication of the costs. Receipts should be provided. All expenses relating to this category must comply with Council's Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy.

4 Private Vehicle Usage

The use of a Councillor's private vehicle for Council business (as defined) will be reimbursed by Council.

Councillors may elect one of two options regarding this reimbursement below:

Option 1

Councillors accept an annual payment of \$5,000 as reimbursement for the use of their private vehicles on Council business.

Option 2

Councillors may make a monthly claim for reimbursement of use of their private vehicles on Council business by submitting the appropriate form detailing the relevant travel based on log book details.

The amount reimbursed will be based on the published ATO business use of motor vehicle cents per kilometre rate applicable at the time of travel.

Councillors will be provided with an appropriate log book to assist in this process.

5 Council Vehicles

5.1 Use of Council provided vehicles on Council business

Councillors will have access to a suitable Council vehicle for Council business if required. A Councillor wishing to use a Council vehicle for Council business must submit a request to the Chief Executive Officer at least two (2) days prior to use, except in exceptional circumstances as determined between the Councillor and Mayor or Chief Executive Officer. Access is subject to availability.

This is for situations where a Councillor's own vehicle isn't immediately available and they have to travel on Council business over long distances (for example, a meeting in Brisbane).

5.2 Private use of Council Vehicles

The use of Council vehicles for private use is only available in emergency situations and the cost of such usage shall be provided at the applicable ATO rate for the vehicle size.

5.3 Fuel Costs

All fuel used in a Council owned vehicle on official Council business will be provided or paid for by Council.

6 Home Office and Telecommunication needs – Consumables, Mobile Phones and Tablets

To enable Councillors to communicate effectively, Councillors will receive an allowance of \$240 per month to purchase communications devices and plans as well as printer consumables for their residences.

7 Administrative Supports and Access to Council Office Facilities

Council is responsible for the provision of appropriate administrative support and facilities to ensure all councillors are able to perform their duties and undertake council business. Administrative support and resources are provided to councillors for the sole purpose of legitimate council business and should be used responsibly and appropriately.

Councillors will be provided with the following:

- Access to suitable hot desks at the Tewanin Office and Council meeting rooms for usage as required;
- Administrative support at the Tewanin Office for council related business;
- Use of Council landline telephone and internet access at the Tewanin Office;
- Access to a printer, photocopier, paper shredder at the Tewanin Office;
- Access to a Fax and/or scanner at the Tewanin Office;
- Any other administrative necessities, which Council resolves, are necessary to meet the business of Council.

Councillors are expected to comply with the same conditions of use, guidelines and processes for business and communication tools that apply to employees.

In addition to the above, the Mayor will be provided with a separate office and an administrative officer for administrative support.

8 Safety Equipment

Council will provide to Councillors necessary safety equipment for use on official business as and when required.

9 Insurance Cover

Councillors will be covered under relevant Council insurance policies while on Council business. Specifically, insurance cover will be provided for public liability, professional indemnity, Councillors liability and personal accident, and, domestic and overseas travel.

Council will pay the excess for injury claims made by a Councillor resulting from the conduct of official Council business and on any claim made under insurance cover.

Council will cover costs incurred through injury, investigation, hearings or legal proceedings into the conduct of a Councillor where arising out of, or in connection with the Councillor's performance of their Councillor functions. Where it has been found that the Councillor breached the provisions of the *Local Government Act 2009* or other legislation, then there will be no cover provided to the Councillor and the Councillor must reimburse Council all associated costs incurred by Council.

10 Limit

Council may by resolution reduce or limit benefits receivable under this policy.

REPORTING

Pursuant to section 186 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, Council's Annual Report must contain the particulars of the expenses incurred by, and the facilities provided to, each Councillor during the financial year under this policy.

REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. The related documents are amended or replaced.
2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of Council

Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed within six months of each quadrennial election.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND COUNCIL POLICIES

Local Government Regulation 2012

Local Government Act 2009

Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy

Councillor Code of Conduct

Councillors Acceptable Requests Guidelines

Version control:

Version	Reason/ Trigger	Change (Y/N)	Endorsed/ Reviewed by	Date
8.0	Amendments	Y	Council	18/08/2022
7.0	Post March 2020 Election Review	Y	Council	21/05/2020
6.0	Amendments	Y	Council	18/10/2018
5.0	Amendments	Y	Council	17/05/2018
4.0	Amendments	Y	Council	18/08/2016
3.0	Post March 2016 Election Review	Y	Council	05/04/2016
2.0	Amendments and new template	Y	Council	17/06/2014
1.0	Create new	N	Council	02/01/2014