

Councillor Allowances and Support

COUNCIL POLICY NO. 092

1. POLICY PURPOSE

To provide guidance on the reimbursement of expenses, provision of facilities and support for Councillors.

2. DEFINITIONS

Nil

3. POLICY

COUNCILLOR'S ALLOWANCES

1. The Victorian Government sets the upper and lower levels for allowances paid to councillors.
2. In accordance with the provisions contained in Australia Tax Office Interpretive Decision 2007/205, Council may enter into a voluntary arrangement with a Councillor under which the Councillor agrees to forego all or part of their Councillors Allowance, including Mayoral Allowance if applicable, in exchange for the Council making contributions to Vision Super, or such other complying superannuation fund nominated by the Councillor and agreed to by the Chief Executive Officer, on their behalf of the amount foregone by the Councillor.
3. Mayor and Councillor allowances will be paid by EFT, in advance, on a monthly basis.

PAYMENT OF EXPENSES

General

1. Section 75 of the *Local Government Act 1989* specifies that a Council may reimburse Councillors for necessary out-of-pocket expenses incurred while performing duties as a Councillor.
2. Councillors will be reimbursed for necessary out-of-pocket expenses on the presentation of a signed statement of expenditure on expenses supported by official receipts and other relevant documentation.
3. Councillors are expected to progressively submit their expense claims on a monthly basis as they are incurred. Claims for expenses during the prior month should be submitted by the last working day of the following month. This enables monitoring of expenditure against budget and accurate and meaningful reporting. All claims relating to each financial year are to be submitted by 15 July of the immediately following financial year.

Council Pool Vehicles and Private Use Vehicles

1. When available, Councillors are required to use a Council vehicle to attend events that form part of the Councillor's official duties outside of the Gannawarra Shire Council boundaries.
2. In the absence of a Council vehicle, a Councillor will be reimbursed for the use of their own private vehicle for:
 - a. attendance at Ordinary and Special Meetings of Council and Councillor Briefing Sessions;
 - b. attendance at Council Committee or Advisory Committee meetings;
 - c. attendance at ordinary, committee or sub-committee meetings of State, Regional or local organisations or bodies where the Councillor has, by Council resolution been elected as a Council delegate;
 - d. attendance at meetings and civic or ceremonial functions convened by the Mayor or the Council;
 - e. attendance at a meeting, function or other official role as a representative of the Mayor;
 - f. attendance at a meeting or function falling within the Councillors ward, if outside of the Councillors ward, Chief Executive Officer or delegate approval is required.
 - g. attendances at conferences, seminars, professional development and training where the attendance has been approved by the Council or the Chief Executive Officer or delegate;
 - h. to and from the airport, rail or bus station or other point where travel to conferences, seminars, professional development and training commences.
3. Reimbursement for private vehicles will be paid in accordance with the prevailing 'cents per kilometre' rate prescribed by the Australian Taxation Office as varied from time to time. Councillors seeking reimbursement are required to submit to the Chief Executive Officer a signed record of private use claim on a monthly basis.
4. Council will not reimburse the cost of any infringements incurred by Councillors.

TRAVEL EXPENSES

General Travel

1. Council will provide the following to Councillors attending approved activities and events ;
 - a. Breakfast, lunch and dinner (excluding alcohol) within reasonable limits for the duration of the stay;
 - b. Accommodation – appropriate accommodation as selected, after consultation, by the Chief Executive's office. Any additional accommodation costs as a result of the attendance of Councillors partners or family members will be met by the Councillor, with the exception of the Mayor's partner;
 - c. Transportation – Council will cover the cost of transportation to, during and from the event. This applies to any of the following forms of travel:
 - i. return economy class air. All overseas travel is to be authorised by resolution of the full Council.
 - ii. private vehicle with reimbursement as specified in this policy
 - iii. economy class train, tram or bus travel; and
 - iv. taxi
 - d. Car parking fees – fees will be reimbursed in respect of hotel/motel parking and airport parking.
2. Reasonable limits - wherever possible, relevant benchmark rates will be utilised for example, the Australian Taxation Office determinations relating to meals, accommodation and transportation.
3. All arrangements are to be handled through the Chief Executive's office.

Seminars, Conferences, Professional Development and Training

1. Council recognises the need for Councillors to attend seminars, conferences, professional development and training in order to be kept fully informed on all Local Government matters and to assist them to perform their roles as Councillors.
2. The annual budget will cover the cost of Seminars, Conferences, Professional Development and Training attendance by Councillors including registration, course or sessional fees;
3. Councillors will be required to submit a written report in respect of any conference or seminar attended except for the ALGA Annual Conference, the Local Government Managers Association National Congress, the MAV Councillor Development Weekend and the VLGA Mayors Weekend. Where more than one Councillor attends an interstate or overseas conference or seminar, a joint report may be submitted.

Child Care

1. Council will reimburse the cost of legitimate family care and child care expenses for attendance at Council functions.
2. Councillors will, on the production of a receipt or relevant documentation, be reimbursed the cost of child care expenses for children up to and including the age of 14 years.
3. Child care costs are not reimbursable if paid for a child cared by a person who normally or regularly lives with the Councillor.
4. All claims for reimbursement are to be supported by a completed claim form.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Computer facilities

1. Internet – Councillors will be provided with an internet enabled device to allow access to email and internet.
2. Email – Councillors will be provided with an email account managed through Gannawarra Shire Council. Councillors' email addresses will be part of the domain name: gsc.vic.gov.au.
3. Document management – Councillors are responsible for ensuring all corporate information is forwarded to Gannawarra Shire Council for capturing in the electronic content management system. This refers to, but is not limited to, formal letters in Microsoft Word and emails.
4. Personal use – Personal use of Council provided equipment is permitted as long as it does not affect the primary use of the device. Councillors will not install any non-approved non Council products on the device.

Telecommunications via Smartphone

Councillors have two (2) options regarding provision of Smartphones:

1. Councillors can elect for Council to provide a Smartphone for their Council business use only. The Smartphone is provided on the basis that personal calls are to be kept to a minimum. It is acknowledged that on occasion personal calls may be required when a Councillor is:
 - on Council business outside normal business hours.Personal calls in these situations and in urgent and/or emergency situations are acceptable. Personal calls outside the situations referred to above are not permitted.
The Council telephone number will be made available to the public, and should only be answered by the relevant Councillor or the built-in message bank service.
Councillors may be required to reimburse Gannawarra Shire Council for excess charges if this policy is not followed.
2. Alternatively, Councillors may choose to provide their own Smartphone i.e. 'Bring Your Own Equipment' and receive a monthly allowance of \$25 as reimbursement for the notional data and phone usage charges relating to Council business undertaken on their personal Smartphone. Where a Councillor wishes to use their own Smartphone for Council business, Councillors must make their personal mobile number available for publication. Note; Council takes no responsibility for loss, breakage, failure, repair or misplaced 'Bring Your Own Equipment'.

Information Communication Technology Support

1. The Corporate Services Directorate will provide familiarisation training for Councillors in addition to documentation aiding Councillors in relation to using the ICT systems provided. Council will provide Councillors with application specific training where necessary through a local training provider.
2. The Corporate Services Directorate will update the software on each Council provided device. Any non-approved non-Council software will be uninstalled during maintenance.
3. The Corporate Services Directorate will provide ICT support in line with that provided to Council officers.
4. All Council provided equipment is to be returned to the Corporate Services Directorate on the conclusion of the Councillor's term, or in the event the Councillor resigns from the position earlier.
5. Faulty equipment or issues are to be reported to the Corporate Services Directorate as soon as possible. All repairs to equipment can only be undertaken by Council and only apply to Council provided equipment.
6. In the event that equipment is lost, stolen or misplaced, the Corporate Service Directorate is to be informed as soon as possible to put in place all preventative measures.

Equipment

1. Councillors will be issued with the following equipment:
 - One (1) only iPad, Tablet, Notebook, Laptop or equivalent (with mobile internet capabilities), charger and protective cover
 - Mobile telephone and charger (with the exception of councillors choosing to bring their own equipment).
2. Councillors will have access to the following for Council business:
 - Printing equipment
 - Audio visual equipment

Councillor's Insignia of Office

1. Councillors shall be provided with the following, upon request:
 - Business Cards
 - A supply of Council logo metal lapel badges (small)
 - A Council tie or scarf
 - A Council badge for Councillors and partners

ADDITIONAL FACILITIES FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Mayoral Vehicle

Council will provide at its cost to the Mayor, a fully registered, insured and maintained vehicle for official and personal use during the mayoral term if he/she so requires. The vehicle will be of a similar standard to the vehicle available to the Chief Executive Officer.

Office Support

The Mayor will be provided with appropriate administrative support during normal business hours to undertake the duties of the Mayor.

Travel Expenses and Accommodation

Council will reimburse travelling expenses for the Mayor's partner whilst accompanying the Mayor on official business.

INSURANCE

1. Councillors are covered by the following insurance policies while performing the duties of civic office including attendance at meetings of external bodies as Council's representative – Personal Accident, Public Liability, Professional Indemnity and Councillors and Officers Liability insurances.
2. 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.

4. RELATED PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

Nil

5. REFERENCES/LEGISLATION

Nil

6. POLICY REVIEW

Council will review this policy as required but always within 12 months after a general election of the Council.

At the time it was reviewed, this policy was compliant with the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

Members of the public may inspect all policies at Gannawarra Shire Council's Kerang and Cohuna office or online at www.gannawarra.vic.gov.au.

Any enquiries in relation to this policy should be directed to the Director Corporate Services on (03) 5450 9333.

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