

 Central Highlands Regional Council	CENTRAL HIGHLANDS REGIONAL COUNCIL POLICY	
	Expenses Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities for Mayor and Councillors	POLICY REF NO CHRCP: 0042

1.0 Policy Purpose

- 1.1 Council is committed to ensuring that Councillors are provided with the facilities required to enable them to perform their duties and payment of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by Councillors for discharging their duties and responsibilities as Councillors.

2.0 Policy Statement

- 2.1 The payment and/or reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities for Councillors is to be open and transparent, prudent, responsible and in accordance with statutory requirements.
- 2.2 The reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities for Councillors will be for the actual cost of legitimate business use.
- 2.3 Councillors should not be financially disadvantaged when carrying out the requirements of the role of Councillor and should be fairly and reasonably compensated in accordance with statutory requirements and community expectations.
- 2.4 A spouse, partner or family member of a Councillor is not entitled to reimbursement of expenses or to have access to facilities allocated to Councillors, other than for the use of council provided vehicle.
- 2.5 For details about entitlements in regard to the payment or reimbursement of Councillor expenses and the provision of facilities for Councillors, refer to Attachment A: Guidelines for Expenses Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities for Mayor and Councillors.
- 2.6 Council will respond to Councillors who have special needs or who have an impairment by varying this policy as required.

3.0 Definitions

Council business means official business conducted on behalf of, and/or approved by council, the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer.

Council business includes functions that are a statutory requirement of the Councillor’s role or are officially recorded in minutes or other public records.

This might also include, attending an event or function to perform official duties or as an official representative such as:

- Ceremonial openings of buildings or facilities, fetes and carnival, annual or presentation dinners, public meetings and functions and events sponsored by council.
- Private meetings arranged through official channels (i.e. documented in official records or diary) for the purpose of conducting bona fide discussions of business of council.

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- Attendance at seminars and conferences where Councillors are required to either deliver a paper and/or attend as a delegate of council as per resolution.
- Any other meeting, event or function described in the *Local Government Act 2009* under insurance of Councillors, for example attendance:
 - Gathering of information by a Councillor necessary to inform him or her of an incident of interest to council or which properly falls in within the responsibility of council and a Councillor.
 - Attendance at civic functions and ceremonies on behalf of the Mayor as delegated by the Mayor.
 - Other business as resolved by Council.

Section 12(4)(h) of the *Local Government Act 2009* states that the Mayor has the extra responsibility of representing the local government at ceremonial or civic functions.

Section 12(5) of the *Local Government Act 2009* states that a Councillor who is not the Mayor may perform the Mayor’s extra responsibilities only if the Mayor delegates the responsibility to the Councillor.

Caretaker period means as defined in section 90A of the *Local Government Act 2009* a period which starts on the day when public notice of the holding of the election is announced by the *Electoral Commission of Queensland* and ends on the day on which the last declaration of the poll is displayed by the Returning Officer.

Civic duties means council business.

Discretionary training means any training that is not determined by council as “mandatory”.

Entertainment and Hospitality means as it is defined in section 196 of the Local Government Regulation 2012.

Expenses means expenses described in the guidelines.

Facilities means the facilities deemed necessary to assist Councillors in their role as shown in the guidelines.

Mandatory training means any training that council resolved that Councillors must attend.

Meal allowance means the daily amount allows for meals while travelling on council business.

Official capacity means activities undertaken while on council business.

Public record means any record created, received or kept in an official capacity.

Reasonable means what would be perceived as prudent, responsible and acceptable to the community. What the community would expect in terms of limits and council being able to demonstrate that there is no excessive use or abuse of public funds.

Representing council means a Councillor is representing council when council resolves that the Councillor is to attend an event or function as a representative of council.

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Strategic Link	s 12 , Local Government Act 2009 s 250 Local Government Regulation 2012 Criminal Code Act 1899
Category	Elected Members
Lead Business Unit	Governance
Public Consultation	No
Adoption Date	20 October 2021
New Review Date	
Document Number	947552
Record Keeping	Council website and the Vine
Related Documents	Councillor Code of Conduct Policy Procurement Policy Local Preference Policy Guidelines for Expenses Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities for Mayor and Councillors (Attachment A).

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Attachment A

Guidelines for Expenses Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities for Mayor and Councillors

1. Purpose of the Document

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to provide information about the payment or reimbursement of expenses and the provision of facilities for Councillor of council, including the Mayor.
- 1.2. Councillor remuneration is not covered by this document. Councillor remuneration is in accordance with the determination of the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal.

2. Approval and Authorisation

- 2.1. The payment or reimbursement of expenses and the provision of facilities for Councillors is subject to council approval where necessary (e.g. for travel), budget provisions and the authorisation of council's Chief Executive Officer or the officer delegated that authority by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 2.2. Where practicable, council officers will provide the specified facilities and manage the payment of expenses on behalf of Councillors. Any claims by Councillors for reimbursement of expenses are authorised by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate.
- 2.3. Where Councillors claim for reimbursement, this must be reconciled with actual costs, supported by receipts unless otherwise noted.

3. EXPENSES

- 3.1. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be provided with a council credit card for business use under the approved administrative process. all claims for reimbursement must be submitted on a monthly basis to the Chief Executive Officer. The following credit card limits will apply:
 - a. Mayor and Deputy Mayor - \$10,000 (each).

Council Business

- 3.2. Where Councillors are attending to council business, council will pay for the approved expenses associated with that activity.
- 3.3. The Mayor attends conferences as the primary Delegate and may attend any other relevant conference/seminar/workshop/forums. The Mayor may be accompanied by the Deputy Mayor or other Councillors as appointed by council.
- 3.4. Council may approve travel for Councillors where council considers it appropriate to promote or represent Central Highlands Region for a local government purpose.

Representing Council at events

- 3.5. Councillors may be required to attend a range of events and functions as part of their role in attending to council business. Council will provide tickets to events for Councillors for the purpose of addressing council's advocacy strategy and to provide support for community social and economic development activities.

Professional development

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- 3.6. The payment of expenses for professional development requires council approval.
- 3.7. There are two categories of professional development for Councillors – Mandatory Training and Discretionary Training.

Mandatory training

- 3.8. Where council resolves that Councillors are to attend mandatory training council will meet all costs.

Examples of mandatory training may include training for Councillor induction, code of conduct, meeting procedures and legislative obligations.

Discretionary training

- 3.9. Where council approves an individual Councillor to attend a conference, workshop or training, other than mandatory training, council will pay the expenses associated with attending the event.

The funding limit for discretionary training is \$5,000 (\$1,250 per annum) for each Councillor during their four (4) year term in office. Unused annual amounts of funding are approved to roll over and can be used at any time within this four year term.

Travel costs

- 3.10. Council will reimburse travel expenses deemed necessary to achieve the business of council where:
 - a. a Councillor is an official representative of council; and
 - b. the activity/event and travel have been endorsed by resolution of council.

In general, the most direct route and cost-effective form of travel must be used. For information on vehicle travel see 4.23.

Accommodation

- 3.11. When Councillor accommodation for council business is necessary, e.g. it is impractical to return home for that evening. This accommodation will be booked and paid for by council.

Meals

- 3.12. Councillors may claim for the reimbursement of each actual cost per meal (breakfast, lunch and dinner) when travelling on council business.
- 3.13. Where possible, any such reimbursement must be authorised by council, or for unforeseen reasons, by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer.
- 3.14. Reasonable beverages, including alcohol, may be included as part of the meal reimbursement.

Entertainment and Hospitality Expenses

- 3.15. Where Councillors incur hospitality expenses when entertaining guests or dignitaries, the maximum amount that may be reimbursed is:

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- a. \$500.00 per annum for each Councillor.
- b. \$5,000.00 per annum for the Mayor.

Any amount in excess of these amounts will require the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

Cab Charge and public transport

- 3.16. Councillors may use cab charge or claim reimbursement for taxi facilities, uber ride-sharing, public transport (rail, bus, or ferry) when attending council business. Costs for incidental personal travel while attending an event must be met by the Councillor.

An approved function includes any function approved pursuant to section 3.2 and 3.6 and as defined above.

4. FACILITIES

- 4.1. Facilities provided for Councillors must be deemed necessary and required to assist Councillors in their official capacity. In accordance with statutory provisions, council may provide Councillors with the facilities listed below.
- 4.2. Council determines the reasonable standard facilities for Councillors. If a Councillor chooses a higher standard of facility than prescribed by council, any difference in cost must be met by the Councillor personally.
- 4.3. All facilities provided to Councillors remain the property of council and must be accounted for during annual equipment audits. The facilities must be returned to council when the Councillor's term expires, unless council agrees to dispose of the facility in some other manner.

Administrative tools and office amenities

- 4.4. The Mayor has an allocated office in the council owned premises in Emerald.
- 4.5. Council provides access to occasional office accommodation and meeting rooms for Councillors to meet with constituents and the public. Such accommodation may be booked through the Executive Assistant in the office of the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

Secretarial support

- 4.6. The Mayor's office will be staffed with an Executive Assistant shared with the Chief Executive Officer.
- 4.7. Limited secretarial support will be provided to Councillors by the current secretarial support based in the office of the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

Computer and Printer for business use

- 4.8. Councillors are provided with a laptop computer, iPad and printer for council business use, at their choosing from Information Services catalogue. The standard of computer shall be similar to that available to council managers.
- 4.9. Councillors will be reimbursed for any apps purchased which are required for official business use.

Photocopier and paper shredder

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4.10. Councillors are entitled to access photocopiers and paper shredders for council business use, that are available at the various council locations.

Stationery

4.11. Councillors are provided stationery for official purposes only, including, but not limited to:

- a. Pens and pen sets
- b. Paper
- c. Note paper
- d. Letterhead
- e. Business cards
- f. Envelopes
- g. 'With Compliments' slips

4.12. Council stationery is not to be converted or modified in any way and may only be used for carrying out the functions of the role of Councillor.

4.13. Stationery does not include any form of advertising by council.

Publications

4.14. Councillors are provided access to copies of relevant legislation, books and journals considered necessary for undertaking their duties.

Other administrative necessities

4.15. Subject to council approval, Councillors may be provided with any other administrative necessities to meet the business of council.

Advertising

4.16. Council will not reimburse or provide funds, services or facilities for the purposes of advertising for Councillors.

Community consultation

4.17. Councillors may use facilities provided to correspond and communicate with community representatives for the purpose of clarifying issues that are relevant to council.

Home office

4.18. Councillors may be provided with a multipurpose unit (photocopier/scanner/fax) for council business used only within a home office environment, should they choose to. These items will be available to select from the Information Services catalogue.

4.19. Councillors who opt to use their own multipurpose unit (photocopier/scanner/fax) may be entitled to reimbursement for up to 50% of printer cartridges/toners.

4.20. Councillors may be provided with home internet access, which includes a monthly access fee and up to 50% of the package costs.

Maintenance costs of any council owned equipment

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4.21. Council will cover all ongoing maintenance costs associated with fair wear and tear of council owned equipment to ensure it is operating for optimal professional use.

Name badge and Personal Protective Equipment

4.22. Councillors will be provided with a name badge and any safety equipment such as safety helmets or glasses are required, in their role.

Vehicles, fuel and parking

4.23. In carrying out council business, Councillors may elect to either:

- a. Use their personal vehicle for council business and claim an allowance for the kilometres travelled. Such allowance will be the rate set by the Australian Taxation Office for vehicle usage and based on a logbook kept by the Councillor that records the purpose of each trip for business purposes; or
- b. Use a council provided vehicle including for reasonable personal use.

4.24. Council vehicles should not be driven by unauthorised persons unless:

- a. required for safety reasons (e.g. fatigue); or
- b. in the event of an emergency; or
- c. in such other circumstances as would reasonably require another driver; and
- d. the driver holds the requisite licence required.

4.25. It should be noted that council insurance does not cover private vehicles used for council business.

Fuel

4.26. Council will meet the fuel costs of vehicles provided by council.

Parking

4.27. Council will reimburse parking costs paid by Councillors while attending to council business.

Fines

4.28. Any fines incurred while travelling in council owned vehicles or privately owned vehicles when attending council business will be the responsibility of the Councillor incurring the fine.

Telecommunication needs

4.29. Council will provide the Mayor and Councillors with a mobile telephone and pay all costs associated with council business use. Councillors will be required to reimburse calls of a personal nature to council.

4.30. If a Councillor uses a personally owned mobile device, council may reimburse up to 50% of the costs incurred (maximum \$500 per annum).

Legal costs and insurance costs

4.31. Councillors will be covered under council insurance policies while discharging civic duties. Specifically, insurance cover will be provided for public liability, professional indemnity,

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Councillor’s liability, personal accident and/or workers’ compensation, international and domestic travel insurance.

4.32. Council may decide, pursuant to the Act, to cover costs incurred through any inquiry, investigation, hearing or legal proceedings into the conduct of a Councillor, or arising out of, or in connection with Councillor’s performance of his/her civic functions.

5. COUNCILLOR ACCOMMODATION AND TRAVEL

General conditions – Councillor accommodation and travel

- 5.1. All Councillor air travel requires prior approval, where possible, by council and authorisation by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate.
- 5.2. All Councillor accommodation requirements will be coordinated through the office of the Chief Executive Officer, and where possible requires prior approval by council and authorisation by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 5.3. All requests for travel (including associated registrations) should be made in sufficient time to take advantage of discounts and gain access to the widest range of accommodation and flights. Failure to do so will limit flight and accommodation options.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1. Councillors are required to:
 - a. process all travel related requests in a timely manner through the Office of Chief Executive Officer so that available discounts are taken;
 - b. make bookings in a timely manner so that available discounts are taken;
 - c. complete necessary reimbursement process for valid out of pocket expenses charged to their credit card each month following completion of the journey; and
 - d. complete all necessary registration and travel request forms.
- 6.2. The Chief Executive Officer must:
 - a. ensure applications comply with policy provisions;
 - b. approve travel requests in a timely manner; and
 - c. implement systems of risk management to ensure that expenditure on travel is efficient, economic and appropriate.
- 6.3. The officer coordinating the travel is responsible for:
 - a. Identifying ‘best deals’ and negotiating special rates with Council’s preferred travel providers;
 - b. Providing advice to Councillors in relation to travel services, policies and procedures;
 - c. Coordinating all travel requests to ensure bookings are made in a timely manner and that all requests are processed in accordance with council policy; and
 - d. Maintain information on issues such as accommodation, airfares, car hire and other related costs for the purpose of reporting to council, as required.

Approval

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- 6.4. All travel requests from a Councillor must be submitted to council and should identify the relevance of such event to the council and as far as practicable indicate the cost of attendance.
- 6.5. Where time does not permit the presentation of a report to council and Councillor's travel has been approved by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer, a report of the delegated approval and the circumstances should be submitted to the next available council meeting.

Air Travel

- 6.6. The most cost-effective form of air travel will be used and therefore flights requested may not always be offered.

Frequent Flyer or Reward Programs

- 6.7. Points from loyalty programs accumulated by Councillors on their personal rewards program, whilst travelling on official council business, must not be used for personal gain. Accumulated points should be redeemed, where possible, for travel on official council business. The use of points should not override the council's 'best fare' available policy.

Class of travel

- 6.8. The standard of air travel for Councillors travelling on council business shall be economy. Councillors may upgrade to a higher class of travel if there is no additional cost to council.

Flexible tickets

- 6.9. Where flexibility is required for return times or connecting flights, a suitably flexible ticket may be purchased with the approval of council.

Accommodation

- 6.10. Accommodation arrangements for Councillors must comply with the section 3.10 of this guideline.

Hire Cars

- 6.11. The requirement for a hire car should be requested at the time of seeking council approval for attendance.

International travel

- 6.12. For approved international travel, actual council business related costs will be reimbursed. Councillors may claim up to \$110.00 per day to cover breakfast, lunch and dinner and the incidental allowance per day.

In-room internet connection for council business purposes

- 6.13. Where in-room internet connection is required for undertaking council business, reasonable connection costs may be claimed on completion of travel. However, it is preferred that Councillors will use hotspot internet from their provided ipad and/or iphone.

Other travel expenses

- 6.14. Hospitality expenses may only be paid in accordance with section 3.15.
- 6.15. Expenses will not be reimbursed for personal items or costs unrelated to council business:

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- a. Babysitting fees.
- b. Kennel fees.
- c. Occasional airline club fees.
- d. Toiletries.
- e. Barber or hair stylist.
- f. Traffic infringements.
- g. In flight and in house movies.
- h. Food related items only for mini bar purchases.
- i. Social events.
- j. Reading materials.

As a guide, expenses not normally reimbursed at home, will not be reimbursed when travelling.

Expenses reimbursement process

6.16. Where practical, council will pay all travel and accommodation expenses before departure, however, any claim for allowance expenses not covered should be made at the completion of travel.

Accompanying partners and personal travel arrangements

6.17. All travel and accommodation for partners of Councillors must be arranged and paid for by the Councillor. Council will not pay for any private travel expenses. In the event costs have been incurred by council for a Councillor’s partner, the Councillor will reimburse council.

6.18. Council will not arrange private travel for Councillors or their partners except where the partner is travelling as an official delegate of council.

Cancellation of travel and accommodation

6.19. If a Councillor cancels travel previously planned and booked by the council as part of official business for council, then council will make every attempt to recoup all costs from travel and accommodation providers. Subject to council approval, authorisation may be given to waiver reimbursement of any unrecovered costs.

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