

NUMBER: S0017/OCEO

ACT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2009

POLICY TITLE: COUNCILLORS' EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT AND PROVISION OF FACILITIES POLICY

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of the policy is to ensure accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses and the provision of facilities provided or incurred by Councillors in the conduct of Council business.

The policy does not provide for Councillor remuneration. Councillor remuneration is determined by the Local Government Remuneration Commission.

2. COMMENCEMENT OF POLICY

This Policy will commence on 25 May 2022 and replace all other policies relating to Councillors' Expenses Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities.

3. APPLICATION OF POLICY

This policy applies to all Councillors for the reimbursement of expenses.

4. PRINCIPLES

This policy ensures that the Council's reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities is consistent with the local government principles and financial sustainability criteria as defined in the *Local Government Act 2009*.

In addition, the principles that underpin this policy are:

- The use of public monies is in the public interest by responsible budgeting and accounting;
- Fair and reasonable allocation of Council resources (allowances, facilities and other benefits) to enable all Councillors to conduct their duties;
- Transparent decision-making by public disclosure of policy and resolutions; and
- Accountability for expenditure and use of facilities through appropriate accountability requirements.

5. DEFINITIONS

Council business	Official business conducted on behalf of, and/or approved by Council, the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer
Region	Within the boundaries of the Charters Towers Regional Council area
Expenses	Payments made by Council to reimburse Councillors for 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 directly by Council for something that is deemed a necessary cost or charge when performing their duties.
Facilities	means the amenities and tools necessary for Councillors to perform their duties efficiently and effectively.
Entertainment or hospitality	As defined in section 196 of the <i>Local Government Regulation 2012</i> and <i>Council's Entertainment and Hospitality Policy</i> .
Professional development	Includes study opportunities, attendance at industry workshops, courses, seminars and conferences that improves Councillors' skills and

	knowledge relevant to their responsibilities as Councillor.
Caretaker period	As defined in section 90A of the Local Government Act 2009 a period which states 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.

6. POLICY PROVISIONS FOR EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

Council will reimburse Councillors for expenses as set out in this policy. Any expenses not provided for by this policy will not be reimbursed without approval from the Chief Executive Officer.

7. EXPENSE CATEGORIES

7.1 Council Business

The Council will reimburse relevant expenses incurred in undertaking Council business which includes:

- Preparing, attending and participating in Council meetings, committee meetings, workshops, strategic briefings, deputations and inspections;
- Attending civic functions or civic events to perform official duties or as an official Council representative;
- Attending public/community meetings, presentation dinners and annual general meetings where invited as a Councillor;
- Attending a community to represent Charters Towers Regional Council; and
- Attending in an official capacity, representing the Council at ordinary meetings, annual general meetings, annual or bi-annual conferences are considered Council business.

7.2 Professional Development

Council will reimburse expenses incurred by a Councillor attending mandatory training including, Councillor induction, code of conduct, meeting procedures and legislative obligations and other training determined by the Chief Executive Officer such as conferences or specific events relevant to the Councillors Portfolio.

A budget for Councillor's professional development expenditure will be set at \$5,000 per Councillor, per term, as part of budget deliberations.

7.3 Travel Expenses

Council will reimburse local, interstate and overseas travel expenses (e.g. flights, car, accommodation, meals and associated registration fees) deemed necessary for undertaking Council business and approved professional development.

Councillors are to travel via the most direct route, using the most economical and efficient mode of transport. The amount of the reimbursement will be the actual amount expended by the Councillor.

Note: Any fines incurred while travelling in Council-owned vehicles, privately owned vehicles or rental vehicles when attending Council business will be the responsibility of the Councillor incurring the fine.

The payment of expenses of Councillors' partners travelling to and attending Local Government Association of Queensland Inc. Conferences are to be borne by the individual Councillors.

Flight Bookings

All Councillor travel approved by Council will be booked and paid for by Council. Economy class is to be used where possible, in limited circumstances Council may approve business class.

Airline tickets are not transferable and can only be procured for the Councillor's travel on Council business.

Travel refunds cannot be used to offset other unapproved expenses. (eg. Cost of partner accompanying the Councillor).

If a change is required to airfares, by Councillors, after the airfares have been booked and payment effected, then the cost of the difference is to be borne by the Councillor, unless the change is required by Council.

Travel Transfer Costs

All transfer expenses (e.g. taxi, trains, buses and ferry fares) associated with travel for Council business will be reimbursed on production of original receipts.

Hire Car

The requirement for a hire car should be identified at the time of seeking Council approval for travel. Any subsequent need for a hire car must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

Private Vehicle Usage

Councillors' private vehicle usage may be reimbursed by Council if:

- the travel has been approved by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer;
- a Council vehicle is not available;
- the claim for mileage is substantiated with logbook details;
- the total travel claim does not exceed the cost of the same travel using economy flights plus the cost of taxi transfers; or
- it is considered impracticable to use a Council vehicle, due to the distances required to travel to Charters Towers, to collect the vehicle to attend to Councillor Portfolio and official functions.

Accommodation

All Councillor accommodation for Council business will be booked and paid for by Council through the normal administrative processes approved by the Chief Executive Officer. Council will pay for accommodation that is the most economical and convenient to the event.

Accommodation bookings for Councillors are to be made by staff in the Office of the Chief Executive Officer.

One night's accommodation prior to the event will only be approved where travel to the event on the day of commencement is not practical.

All expenses incurred at the accommodation venue other than accommodation and meals must be settled at the time of departure. It is the Councillor's responsibility to seek reimbursement of legitimate expenses upon return. Reimbursement must be sought using a travel expenses claim form and will not be approved without original receipts.

Meals

Councillors will be reimbursed reasonable costs of meals when:

- the Councillor incurs the cost personally;
- the meal was not provided within the registration costs of the approved activity/event/travel;
- the Councillor can produce original documents sufficient to verify the actual meal cost; and
- the expenses are reasonable.

If a Councillor cannot produce a receipt for a meal, they have purchased then a statutory declaration must be completed to claim the reimbursement.

Guidelines relative to meal claims are contained within the *Travel and Expenses Claim Form* attached to Administrative Directive D0016/CCS.

No alcohol will be paid for by Council with the exception of events that are in accordance with Council's Statutory Policy - S0028/OCEO - Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy.

Incidental Expenses

Incidental expenses may be paid by Council to cover any additional necessary costs incurred by Councillors traveling on Council business. Invoices and receipts must be provided to Council for approval of incidental expenses.

7.4 Mayoral Hospitality Expenses

Council may reimburse the Mayor up to \$1,000 per annum for hospitality expenses deemed necessary in the conduct of Council business. Invoices and receipts must be provided to Council for approval of such expenses.

7.5 Caretaker Period

Once the caretaker period commences, Councillors will only be eligible to claim expense reimbursement for costs relating to routine activities or as otherwise approved by Council.

Councillors may continue to use Council resources, including newsletters, brochures and emails as part of ongoing communication with their constituents about their portfolio activities during the caretaker period provided, they are not used for electioneering or political purposes, or contain election material.

Detailed information on requirements in caretaker period is detailed in Council's Election Caretaker Period Policy STRAT0067/OCEO.

8. POLICY PROVISIONS FOR FACILITIES

Council will provide Councillors with the facilities necessary to efficiently discharge their duties and responsibilities as Councillors. All facilities provided to Councillors remain the property of Council and must be returned to Council when a Councillor's term expires.

8.1 Private Use of Council Owned Facilities

Based on the principle that *no private benefit is to be gained*, the facilities provided to Councillors by Council are to be used only for Council business unless prior approval has been granted by resolution of Council.

The Council resolution authorising private use of Council owned facilities will set out the term under which the Council will reimburse Councillors for the percentage of private use. This will apply when Councillors have private use of Council owned motor vehicles and/or mobile telecommunication devices.

8.2 Facilities Categories

Administrative Tools

Council provides an individual office for the Mayor, and access to meeting rooms for Councillors upon request.

In general, rooms provided for Councillor use will be Council-owned or controlled premises such as Council's Board Room or Gold & Beef Rooms.

Administrative tools may be provided to Councillors, as required, to assist Councillors in their role.

Administrative tools include:

- laptop computer
- stationery (upon request)
- publications
- use of Council landline telephones and internet access in Council offices (upon request)
- use of photocopiers in Council offices
- Mobile telephone (Mayor only)
- Council may provide a Councillor with home office computer equipment to support the laptop and internet access if necessary

Maintenance costs of Council owned equipment

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

Name badge & business cards

Council will provide Councillors with a name badge and business cards.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Councillors

Council will provide the necessary PPE for use on official business eg. Safety Vest, helmet/boots.

Uniforms

All Councillors will receive a uniform allowance of \$500.00 each for the term plus:

- One (1) jacket (branded as per Uniform policy)
- One (1) "Friday" polo shirt (branded as per Uniform policy)
- One (1) tourism polo shirt (branded as per uniform policy)

This allowance is non-transferable.

All Councillors' corporate clothing is to comply with Council's corporate clothing range.

Use of Council vehicles on Council business

Councillors may have access to a Council vehicle for official council business.

Private Use of Council Vehicles

Private use of Council owned vehicles is permitted if prior approval has been granted by resolution of Council. Council will, in its resolution authorise private use, set out the terms for the Councillor to reimburse Council for such private use.

Motor Vehicle – Mayor

Council will provide the Mayor with a vehicle for the sole use of the Mayor in carrying out their official Council duties and for reasonable private use as per the conditions provided in the approval granted by resolution of Council.

Should the Mayor elect not to be provided with a Council vehicle, Council will reimburse (using the ATO per kilometre) all council business kilometres travelled in the Mayor's private vehicle. Alternatively, the Mayor may have access to Council vehicles similar to the conditions of provision for Councillors.

Fuel Costs

Fuel for a council-owned vehicle used for official Council business, including any Mayoral use outlined in this policy, will be provided/paid for by Council.

Car parking amenities

Council will provide Councillors with:

- Car parking at the Charters Towers Regional Council office premises and/or

- Reimbursement of parking costs paid by Councillors while attending to official Council business on the presentation of an official receipt.

Miscellaneous Support and Expenses

- Where Council meetings, functions or events extend through normal meal times, Council will provide meals for Councillors.
- Administrative support will be provided to Councillors in accordance with S0078/OCEO Councillor Administrative Support Policy.

9. VARIATIONS

- 9.1** Council reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this Policy.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulations 2012

D0016/CCS Travel Arrangements & Expense Claims – Councillors and Staff

S0028/OCEO – Statutory Policy – Entertainment and Hospitality Expenditure Policy

S0078/OCEO Councillor Administrative Support Policy

STRAT0067/OCEO Election Caretaker Period Policy

DOCUMENT REVIEW:

The document is to be reviewed upon changes to relevant legislation, or every two years if no changes have been required to be enacted.

Document Adopted: Council Meeting 18 May 2022
Resolution Number:

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