

EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT AND PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

1. Scope:

This Policy applies to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors of Rockhampton Regional Council.

2. Purpose:

This Policy will ensure accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors.

This Policy will also ensure that elected members are provided with reasonable facilities to assist them in carrying out their civic duties.

(This Policy does not provide for salaries or other form of Councillor remuneration. Councillor remuneration is in accordance with the determination of the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal.)

3. Reference (eg Legislation, related documents):

- Local Government Act 2009
- Local Government (Operations) Regulation 2010
- Local Government (Finance, Plans and Reporting) Regulation 2010
- Income Tax Assessment Act 1997
- Taxation Rulings issued by the Australian Taxation Office
- RRC Travel and Conference Attendance Policy
- RRC Travel and Conference Attendance Procedure
- Procurement Policy and Purchasing Guidelines

4. Definitions:

To assist in interpretation, the following definitions shall apply:

Authorising person: shall mean the person with delegated authority to approve expenditure or reimbursement for Councillor expenses and facilities.

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 business continuity for the Council, for example official Council meetings, Councillor forums and workshops, Committees/Boards as Council's official representative, scheduled meetings relating to portfolios or Council appointments.

Council Business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local government area, for example Council may decide that Council business includes civic ceremony duties such as opening a school fete.

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, Deputy Mayor and Councillors.

Expenses: shall mean costs reasonably incurred, or to be incurred, in connection with Councillors discharging their duties. The expenses may be either reimbursed to Councillors or paid direct by Council for something that is deemed a necessary cost or charge.

Expenses are not included as remuneration.

Facilities: shall mean the facilities deemed necessary to assist Councillors in their role.

Public record: shall mean any record created, received or kept in an official capacity.

Reasonable: shall mean Council must make sound judgements and consider what is prudent, responsible and acceptable to the community when determining reasonable levels of facilities and expenditure.

5. Context:

The payment and/or reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities for Councillors must only be for the actual cost of legitimate business use and only in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2009* and the *Local Government (Operations) Regulations 2010*.

Council is committed to ensuring that Councillors are provided with the facilities required to enable them to perform their duties.

The payment and/or reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities for Councillors:

- is to be open and transparent, prudent, responsible, acceptable to the community and in accordance with statutory requirements;
- based on ensuring economy and efficiency; and
- subject to budget provisions.

Council's Annual Report must contain the information as stipulated in the Local Government Act and associated Regulations.

Spouses, partners and family members of Councillors are not entitled to reimbursement of expenses or to have access to facilities allocated to Councillors.

The following expenses refer to actual expenses deemed necessary for Council business. Councillors are only entitled to the expenses contained in the categories listed below.

5.1 Travel as Required to Represent Council

All Councillor travel requires the approval of Council via a report to Council identifying the relevance of such event to the Council and as far as practicable indicate the cost of attendance.

Council may approve local, intrastate, interstate, and overseas travel for Councillors where Council considers it appropriate to promote or represent the Rockhampton Regional area for a local government purpose.

Where time does not permit the presentation of a report to Council:

- (a) The CEO may approve any requests for travel by the Mayor subject to a report being submitted to the next available Council Meeting; and
- (b) The Mayor may approve any Councillor's travel subject to a report being submitted to the next available Council Meeting.

Where Councillors are appointed by the Council as Council's representative on State or Federal committees or Government associations, all travel and accommodation associated with the Councillor's fulfilment of that role is deemed as approved without the need for a further report to Council.

Where Councillors are attending to Council business such as meetings, functions or other activities in an official capacity, Council will pay for the approved expenses associated with that activity.

The following restrictions apply in the following circumstances:

- Mayor: No limit to travel to attend meetings to represent Council in undertaking his/her responsibilities.
- Committee Chair: No limit to travel to attend meetings to represent the interest of the Committee in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference.
- Councillors: No limit to travel to attend meetings to represent Council when nominated or requested by the Mayor, Committee Chair or CEO.

When attending a meeting where the Councillor is representing Council on official business, Council should consider the benefits of having an appropriate Council Officer accompany them. This arrangement is to be organised through the CEO.

All travel and conference arrangements must be made in accordance with Council's Travel and Conference Attendance Policy and associated Procedure. All expenses incurred in relation to travel and conference attendance will be reimbursed in accordance with Council's Travel and Conference Attendance Policy and associated Procedure.

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.

5.1.1 Conference Attendance

The Mayor attends the following Conferences as the primary Delegate - CQLGA, ULGA, LGAQ and ALGA.

The Mayor shall be accompanied by any Councillor who has been appointed as an organisational representative committee member on those respective Associations or has been determined as a Council delegate to those Associations on annual review of the membership of those organisations and may be accompanied by a relevant Committee Chair in relation to specific theme or focus conferences in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference

The table shall appoint the other delegates and/or attendees at the above conferences.

In addition to the above, the following limits apply to conference attendance:

Mayor:	5 conferences per year
Committee Chairs:	4 conferences per year
Councillors:	3 conferences per year

The CEO, where possible, will advise Councillors of upcoming conferences. Councillors shall give notice of their desire to attend a conference by giving notice to the CEO seven (7) days prior to the relevant Committee/Council Meeting.

Where the Councillor wishes to attend a conference and has exceeded the above limits, the CEO will submit a report to the table and the Council will determine if the Councillor is able to attend.

5.1.2 Representing Council at events

Councillors may be required to attend a range of events and functions as part of their role in attending to Council business. Councillors may, for example, be required to attend significant sporting and other community events in an official capacity.

Where Council resolves or when the Mayor or CEO determines that a Councillor is required to attend such an event as a delegate of Council, Council will pay for expenses associated with attending that event.

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.

5.2 Professional development

The payment of expenses for professional development requires Council approval.

There are two categories of professional development for Councillors – Mandatory Training and Discretionary Training.

5.2.1 Mandatory training

Mandatory training/Professional Development is training where one or more Councillors are required to attend courses, workshops, seminars or conferences for skill development related to the Councillor's role. Examples of this type of training include Councillor Induction, meeting procedures and legislative obligations.

Attendance at conferences include major industry events (e.g. Australian Local Government Association Conference, Australian Local Government Women's Association Conference, Local Government of Queensland Conference) or conferences that are related to all Councillors or a particular portfolio for that Councillor. Council will meet all costs.

5.2.2 Discretionary training

Where a Councillor wishes to attend a conference, workshop or training to improve skills relevant to their role as a Councillor (other than mandatory training), Council approval is required to pay the expenses of the event.

If the Councillor wishes to attend discretionary training, the CEO will approve the discretionary training if costs are within the limits of \$5,000 per term, however this may count towards the number of conferences under the requirements of 5.1.1.

Where the Councillor wishes to attend a conference and has exceeded the limits, the CEO will submit a report to the table and the Council will determine if the Councillor is able to attend.

The funding limit for discretionary training is \$5,000 for each Councillor during their four (4) year term in office. Travel, meals, accommodation and other costs associated with discretionary training are included in the relevant expenditure categories.

5.3 Payment of Expenses

Expenses will be paid to a Councillor through administrative processes approved by the CEO subject to the limits outlined in this Policy and Council's Travel and Conference Attendance Policy and associated Procedure subject to the following variation:

Expenses relating to the consumption of alcohol will be reimbursed only where such expense is incurred with the provision of a meal and which on review would not be deemed to be excessive.

Should the Councillor choose not to attend a provided dinner/meal, then the full cost of the alternative meal shall be met by the Councillor.

5.4 Hospitality Expenses

Where Councillors incur hospitality expenses while conducting Council business, apart from official civic receptions organised by the Council, the maximum amount that may be reimbursed is:

\$500.00 per annum for each Councillor; and
\$6,000.00 per annum for the Mayor.

Hospitality expenses related to official receptions and other functions organised by council officers are met from relevant approved budgets.

5.5 Provision of Facilities

Facilities provided for Councillors must be deemed necessary and required to assist Councillors in their official capacity. In accordance with statutory provisions, Council may only provide Councillors with the facilities listed below.

Council determines the reasonable standard for facilities for Councillors. If a Councillor chooses a higher standard of facility than that prescribed by Council, any difference in cost must be met by the Councillor personally.

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.

5.5.1 Administrative tools and office amenities

Office space and access to meeting rooms

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be provided with a dedicated office in the Rockhampton Office.

Council provides access to occasional office accommodation and meeting rooms for all Councillors to meet with constituents and the public. Such accommodation should be booked through the Customer Service Section.

Secretarial support

The Mayor's office will be staffed with a Personal Assistant and an Administrative Assistant as a minimum. Additional staffing will be provided as deemed to be warranted from time to time by the CEO based on workloads.

The Deputy Mayor's office will be provided with secretarial support from the Mayor's office. Limited secretarial support will be provided to other Councillors as warranted by the CEO and based on demand.

Computer and Printer for business use

Councillors are provided with a laptop computer and printer for Council business use. The standard of computer shall be similar to that available to Council managers.

Photocopier and paper shredder

Councillors are entitled to access photocopiers and paper shredders for business use at the various Council offices. Access to domestic photocopiers/scanners may be provided for the home based offices, on request by Councillors.

Stationery

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

- Pens and pen sets
- Paper
- Note paper
- Letterhead
- Business cards
- Envelopes
- Briefcase
- 'With Compliments' slips

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. Stationery does not include any form of advertising by Council.

Publications

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

Other administrative necessities

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

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Advertising

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

Community consultation

Councillors may use facilities provided to correspond with community representatives for the purpose of clarifying issues that are relevant to their division or the region in general. Where a Councillor chooses to undertake further community consultation on a particular matter, in addition to that approved by Council, the Councillor is responsible for those costs.

5.5.2 Home office

Councillors may be provided with home office equipment comprising a computer, facsimile machine, printer, lockable filing cabinet, desk and chair and internet access for business use only. Where Councillors elect to establish a home office, Council will provide a land line connection to enable phone and internet access for business use only.

5.5.3 Maintenance costs of any Council owned equipment

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.

5.5.4 Name badge and uniforms

Councillors will be provided with any safety equipment such as overalls, safety shoes, safety helmets or glasses, as required, in their role. Councillors will be provided with uniforms, comprising five (5) items and a Blazer, and a name badge if required.

5.5.5 Vehicles, fuel and parking

Councillors, with the exception of the Mayor, may either:

- (a) Be provided with a Council owned vehicle for official business, or
- (b) Use their own private vehicle for business purposes and claim a mileage allowance for the business use of the vehicle.

Should a Councillor choose to be provided with a fully maintained council owned vehicle, he/she may elect to have full private use of that vehicle, subject to reimbursement to council for expenses (see below) associated with the private use of the vehicle:

- (a) Councillors, with the exception of the Mayor, are to reimburse Council for the private use of Council owned vehicles based on an annual log book assessment over a period of 12 weeks: or
- (b) In lieu of keeping a vehicle log and paying Council for private use, based on actual kilometers, Councillors may purchase the rights to the private use of the Council vehicle at a cost of \$3000 (indexed to CPI), noting that Councillor private use of Council vehicles is likely to be limited in nature. Limited private use is defined as use of the motor vehicle that is incidental to business use and is of an infrequent and minor nature. In assessing legitimate business use, it is recognised that Councillors are expected to be available for constituents on an ongoing basis and will often be working and interacting with the community as part of their role as a Councillor, even whilst not attending to formal council functions.

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This cost reflects fair value for private use, based on variable costs on owning a comparable vehicle and acknowledging that Councillors are expected by the community to be available outside of normal work hours for constituent consultation.

Alternatively, a Councillor may be provided with a fully maintained council owned vehicle and shall record all private use and on a monthly basis shall submit same to the CEO. The CEO will then invoice the Councillor for all private use. Such amount will be based on the mileage allowances recommended by the Australian Tax Office.

Should a Councillor choose to use their own vehicle, the amount reimbursed will be the actual amount (or equivalent mileage) expended by the Councillor, validated by log book records. The amount to be reimbursed will be based on the mileage allowances recommended by the Australian Tax Office.

The Mayor is to be provided with a Council owned vehicle for Council business. It is recognised that community expectations and demands on the Mayor are such that generally all vehicle use is deemed to be council business. The requirement to calculate private use is not applicable to the Mayor, unless the Mayor takes personal leave from Council for a period of more than one week. Where such personal leave is taken the Mayor will reimburse Council 50% of the FBT that would be applicable to the vehicle for that period.

During the term of Council a Councillor may change his/her vehicle arrangements providing it is cost neutral for Council. Should excessive costs to Council be apparent the CEO may refuse the request or require the Councillor to meet such costs.

5.5.6 Telecommunication needs

Councillors will be provided with a mobile telephone or hand held device. Where Council provides a mobile telephone or hand held device, Council will pay for all costs associated with the business use. Any personal calls made by the Councillor should be reimbursed to Council. The Mayor is entitled to have the full cost of Council business related mobile phone/PDA charges paid by Council. It is recognised that community obligations and demands on the Mayor are such that generally all mobile phone/PDA charges are deemed to be council business.

5.5.7 Legal costs and insurance cover

Council may decide 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 the Councillor's performance of his/her civic functions.

Council shall resolve on this matter on each and every occasion specifically. Councillors will be covered under Council insurance policies while discharging civic duties. Specifically, insurance cover will be provided for public liability, professional indemnity, Councillor's liability, personal accident and/or workers compensation, international and domestic travel insurance.

6. Evaluation Process:

This Policy is reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. The related information is amended or replaced.
2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by the Council.

Notwithstanding the above, this Policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than two years.

7. Responsibilities:

Sponsor	Chief Executive Officer
Business Owner	Chief Executive Officer
Policy Owner	Chief Executive Officer
Policy Compliance	Governance and Innovation

8. Changes to Policy:

This Policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by the Council.

**EVAN PARDON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**