



Strategic policy

COUNCILLORS' EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT AND PROVISION OF FACILITIES

Corporate Plan reference:	5. An outstanding organisation 5.1 A high performing, customer-focused organisation marked by great people, good governance and regional leadership Performance pathway: strong leadership enabling Councillors, individuals and teams to be their best.
Endorsed by Council on:	
Manager responsible for policy:	Manager Corporate Governance

Policy purpose

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

Policy scope

This policy applies to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors and is made pursuant to section 250 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012* (the Regulation). Councillors' remuneration falls outside the scope of this policy.

Policy statement

1.1 Commencement

The Sunshine Coast Regional Council "Councillors' Expenses Reimbursement and Provision of Facilities" policy is effective immediately upon adoption by Council. The previous policy will cease to have effect on that date.

1.2 General entitlement:

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred while undertaking Council business. Councillors will be provided with appropriate facilities to assist them in undertaking their duties.

Entitlement: An entitlement budget will be allocated each financial year for reasonable expenses incurred, including, but not limited to, expenses as described below.

1.3 Exclusions

1.3.1 Spouses, partners and family members

Councillors are not entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred for spouses, partners or other family members without the prior approval of the CEO. Equally where Council has incurred, for the

sake of expediency, an expense associated with spouses, partners etc, Councillors will reimburse to Council the full amount of the expense.

1.3.2 Advertising

Councillors are not entitled to be reimbursed or provided with funds, services or facilities for advertising purposes.

1.3.3 Alcohol

Councillors are not entitled to be reimbursed or provided with funds for the purchase of alcoholic beverages without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

1.3.4 Overseas travel

Resolution of Council is required for non-personal overseas travel under this policy where such travel falls outside of Council's adopted international relations policy.

1.3.5 Other exclusions

- a. Expenses related to functions and activities requested or organised by council departments will be met from the relevant approved departmental budget.
- b. Expenses associated with participation in the following programs will be met from existing budgets:
 - i. Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly when attending as council's voting delegate;
 - ii. Local Government Association of Queensland Annual Conference when attending as council's voting delegate;
 - iii. Local Government Association of Queensland Elected Member Updates when organised for all councillors;
 - iv. Australian Institute of Company Directors company directors course;
 - v. New councillor orientation programs;
 - vi. Other events as may be approved by the CEO from time to time, including but not limited to, portfolio related activities.
- c. It is reasonable that expenses associated with advocacy and representative activities undertaken by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on behalf of Council to be adequately funded from existing budgets for this purpose.

1.4 Expenses

1.4.1 Professional Development

Entitlement: Councillors are encouraged to undertake relevant professional development as defined in this policy and will be reimbursed or entitled to the cost of reasonable expenses incurred for professional development on provision that sufficient funding remains in the approved entitlement budget.

1.4.2 Travel Costs

Entitlement: Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for travel costs when undertaking professional development or council business, in accordance with the following conditions:

- a. Council will book and pay for all travel under this policy;
- b. economy class travel is the standard, unless otherwise approved;
- c. travel is undertaken via the most direct route;
- d. requests for travel should be made in sufficient time to take advantage of discounts and gain access to the widest range of flights;
- e. travel tickets are not transferable;
- f. travel insurance is provided for all Councillors on Council business.

Entitlement: Councillors may be reimbursed for parking as well as costs associated with travel via public transport where such costs are incurred in the course of undertaking professional

development or council business. Any fines or infringements issued while undertaking such activities are the personal responsibility of the Councillor incurring the fine.

Council will cover reasonable costs for tolls and other charges associated with toll roads. The CEO may seek to recover the cost of tolls and other charges from Councillors from time to time should it become apparent that the costs incurred are not reasonable.

1.4.3 Accommodation

Entitlement: Councillors are entitled to stay in accommodation to a standard of 4 stars or equivalent where possible when undertaking professional development or other council business where it is not reasonable for the councillor to return home for the night, in accordance with the following conditions:

- a. Council will book and pay for all accommodation under this policy;
- b. accommodation offered as part of a conference package will be booked where practicable;
- c. where a councillor chooses to stay with friends or family, no accommodation expenses will be paid.

Councillors may be reimbursed for reasonable incidentals in accordance with this policy.

1.4.4 Meals

Entitlement: Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for the cost of meals in accordance with the Australian Tax Office's Taxation Determination ruling *Income Tax: what are the reasonable travel and overtime meal allowance expense amounts* for the relevant income year, when undertaking professional development or council business within the following conditions:

- a. the costs are incurred personally;
- b. the meal was not provided as part of the registration costs of the activity, event or included in the travel booking.

1.4.5 Hospitality

Entitlement: Councillors are entitled to reimbursement of reasonable costs for providing hospitality as defined within this policy provided sufficient funding remains in the approved entitlement budget.

1.4.6 Corporate Gifts

Entitlement: Councillors may purchase and present corporate gifts as defined within this policy provided sufficient funding remains in the approved entitlement budget. Gifts may be presented for the purposes of showing appreciation to community groups or individuals, as awards or prizes or to interstate and international delegations.

Reimbursement will not be made for cash awards or prizes.

1.5 Facilities

1.5.1 Administrative support

Entitlement: Councillors are entitled to reasonable administrative support to be able to perform their duties and undertake council business. Councillor support staff will be employees of Council and subject to Council's usual terms and conditions of employment. The service level for councillors support staff will be reviewed on a periodic basis and shall be subject to budgetary and operational constraints.

Councillor support staff will not assist councillors in organising their non-council related business.

1.5.2 Council office accommodation and meeting rooms

Entitlement: Councillors are entitled to reasonable office accommodation and access to meeting rooms to be able to perform their duties and undertake council business. The standard of office accommodation will be determined by the Chief Executive Officer and located at council owned or

leased premises. Appropriate furniture will be provided to ensure the councillor can perform their duties.

1.5.3 Business and communication tools

Entitlement: Councillors will be issued with business and communication tools to assist them in performing their duties and undertaking council business, in accordance with the following conditions:

- a. All tools are procured by Council and are of the same standard as those available to senior management.
- b. All tools remain the property of the Council and must be accounted for during any audit and returned at the end of the councillor's term of office.
- c. Councillors are expected to comply with the same conditions of use, guidelines and processes for business and communication tools that apply to employees.

1.5.4 Mobile device costs

Entitlement for Mayor: The Mayor is entitled to have the full cost of council business related mobile device charges paid by council. It is recognised that community expectations and demands on the Mayor are such that generally all mobile device charges are deemed to be council business.

General entitlement: the full cost of Council issued mobile devices will be paid by Council. Councillors, with the exception of the Mayor, are entitled to have the full cost of council business related mobile device charges paid by council, in accordance with the following conditions:

- a. Personal call costs are recognised, in principle, as equal to 5% of the total call and data charges for a mobile device.
- b. In the first year of each Council term, Councillors will be invoiced on a periodic basis for costs attributable to personal calls. After the first year, the average of each Councillor's personal usage will be calculated. Each Councillor will then pay their calculated average personal use amount by automatic payroll deduction for the remainder of the Council term.

1.5.5 Vehicles

Entitlement for Mayor: The Mayor is entitled 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 5.5% of the undepreciated value of the vehicle that would be applicable to the vehicle for that period.

General entitlement: Councillors, with the exception of the Mayor, are entitled to be provided with a Council vehicle for official council business, with access to private use of that vehicle subject to reimbursement to council for expenses associated with the private use of the vehicle:

- a. The expense for private use shall be calculated such that the contribution by the councillor will be either:
 - i. 5.5% of the undepreciated value of the vehicle, calculated annually; or
 - ii. Average private use over a 3 month period substantiated by log book details provided by the councillor.
- b. Councillors must advise the CEO of which contribution method they choose upon commencement of the council term.

Except were specified otherwise in this policy, the use and allocation of vehicles shall be in accordance with the Chief Executive Officer's Motor Vehicle Allocation and Use Guideline.

The model and standard of vehicle offered to Councillors will be equal to that offered to senior management through Council's approved fleet procurement processes. In the event that the

standard vehicles offered are not appropriate in a Councillor's individual circumstances, the CEO may approve the procurement of a reasonable alternative model at his/her discretion.

The reasonable cost of professionally cleaning Councillors' vehicles will be approved once per quarter.

Other arrangement: Councillors may enter into an alternative arrangement in lieu of the provision of a Council vehicle, suitable to their personal circumstances, at the discretion of the CEO. Such arrangement should equate to no more than the value of the general vehicle entitlement. All vehicles will be supplied and maintained in accordance with relevant Council vehicle and fleet management policies.

1.5.6 Parking

Entitlement: Councillors are entitled to park vehicles issued by Sunshine Coast Council in parking spaces designated for either "councillor use" or "SCC vehicle use" at any of the Council administration buildings.

1.5.7 Legal costs and insurance cover

Responsibility: Council may decide, by resolution, pursuant to section 107 of 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 the councillor's performance of his/her duties. Councillors will be covered under Council insurance policies while discharging their duties. Specifically, insurance cover will be provided for public liability, professional indemnity, Councillors' liability, personal accident and/worker's compensation, international and domestic travel insurance.

Guiding principles

This policy is compliant with the principles underpinning the Local Government Act 2009 (the Act), i.e.

- a. transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and
- b. sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services; and
- c. democratic representation social inclusion and meaningful community engagement; and
- d. good governance of, and by, local government; and
- e. ethical and legal behaviour of councillors and local government employees.

Reporting

In accordance with the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, the expenses incurred and the facilities provided to councillors under this policy will be summarised in Council's annual report.

Definitions

Advertising: informing and/or educating the public about an idea, goods or services by using an appropriate communication tool.

Approved: approved by council resolution.

Business and communication tools: computers, laptops, mobile devices, scanners, printers, faxes, photocopiers, landlines, access cards, identification badges, protective clothing and stationery.

CEO: the Chief Executive Officer of Sunshine Coast Council.

Civic function: a function that the Mayor or Deputy Mayor hosts to promote inter-governmental relations, recognition of significant contributions or achievements made by community groups and individuals.

Civic event: ceremonial events for the community that Council has an obligation to deliver under a state of federal arrangement and that require the attendance of the Mayor or Council representative.

Corporate gift: includes, but is not limited to, various items of merchandise displaying Sunshine Coast Council branding, tickets to Sunshine Coast Council events, locally made items or items of local significance, wreaths and flowers for significant events and condolences provided for appropriate members of the community procured for the purpose of presentation. Cash donations, prizes or gifts are strictly prohibited.

Council business: activities conducted on behalf of council where a councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy a legislative requirement, perform ceremonial activities or achieve business objectives of the council. Council business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local community. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Preparing, attending and participating in council meetings, committee meetings, workshops, strategic briefings, deputations and inspections;
2. Undertaking professional development opportunities;
3. Attending civic functions or civic events;
4. Attending public/community meetings, presentation dinners, annual general meetings and the like where invited as a Councillor;
5. Attending community events (e.g. school fetes, community group awards and presentations, fundraisers); and
6. Attending networking events and business meetings when attending as a Councillor.

Councillors: the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and all other Councillors.

Duties: Councillors' roles and responsibilities set out in the Act.

Expense: reasonable payment for costs incurred, or to be incurred, in the Councillor discharging their duties. These expenses are to be reimbursed to councillors (*or paid directly by Council if deemed appropriate*).

Facility: the resources and tools necessary for councillors to perform their duties efficiently and effectively; and at a level that fulfils community expectation.

Hospitality: includes, but is not limited to, the provision of:

1. food or beverages while undertaking council business; and
 2. corporate gifts as defined in this policy,
- on proviso that sufficient funds remain in the approved entitlement budget.

Mobile device: includes mobile phones, smart phones, blackberry devices, iPads, iPhones, tablets and other similar equipment.

Portfolio: the collection of functions assigned by Council to individual councillors from time to time.

Private Vehicle Use: any use of a Council vehicle for purposes other than Council business (as defined above).

Professional Association: an association of practitioners of a given profession.

Professional Development: any facilitated learning opportunity. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Conferences, workshops, seminars or training provided by a government department (e.g. Department of Local Government) or professional association;
2. Study tours, conferences, workshops, meetings where a Councillor has been approved as Council's representative;
3. Membership of relevant professional or industry associations;
4. Subscriptions to relevant professional association or industry journals;
5. Purchase of relevant published reference materials including books and journals.

Note: Reimbursement of expenses incurred for travel, accommodation, meal and incidentals associated with professional development will be in accordance with this policy. Necessary activities in relation to portfolio responsibilities will be treated in accordance with clause 1.3.5(b)(vi) of this policy.

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

Region: inside the boundaries of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council local government area.

Related policies and legislation

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulation 2012

Councillor Code of Conduct (23 August 2012)

Councillor Portfolio System and Protocols 2016 (21 April 2016)

Mayoral and Councillor Discretionary Funding Policy (20 June 2013)

Councillor Emergent Capital Works and Minor Operational Works – Utilisation Policy (14 June 2014)

Advocacy and Engagement Expenses Policy (6 September 2013)

Local Government Elections Policy (6 November 2015)

Media Engagement Policy – Councillor (15 December 2012)

Councillors' Social Media Policy (6 November 2015)

Entertainment and Hospitality Policy (16 July 2009)

Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy (31 July 2013)

Mobile Device Policy (8 August 2013)

Procurement Policy (annual)

Chief Executive Officer's Procedure for Motor Vehicle Use and Allocation (1 July 2017)

Version control:

Version	Reason/ Trigger	Change (Y/N)	Endorsed/ Reviewed by	Date
1.1	Review of previous SCRC policy No.4	YES	Ordinary Meeting	25 June 2011
2.1	Review	Yes	Ordinary Meeting	28 June 2012
3.1	Review	Yes	Ordinary Meeting	25 July 2013
3.2	Updated Branding and Department Names	No	Corporate Governance Branch	10 January 2017
4.1	Review	Yes	Ordinary Meeting	12 October 2017

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