

# Councillors' Expenses App A Policy

## STRATEGIC POLICY

### COUNCILLORS' EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT AND PROVISION OF FACILITIES

<b>Corporate Plan Reference:</b>	8. Great Governance  8.1 Ethical, accountable and transparent decision-making  8.1.1 Develop and implement a governance framework that provides transparent and accountable processes and enhances council's reputation 8.1.3 Councillors and employees are aware of the importance of ethical behaviour, compliance with codes of conduct and providing complete information and advice
<b>Endorsed by Council on:</b>	
<b>Policy Owner and Department:</b>	Executive Director, Finance and Business

## 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 45 of the *Local Government (Operations) Regulation 2010* (the Regulation).

## PRINCIPLES

This policy is compliant with section 102 of the Regulation as well as the principles underpinning the *Local Government Act 2009* (the Act), i.e.

- transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest;
- good governance of, and by, local government; and
- ethical and legal behaviour of councillors and local government employees.

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## 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, mobile devices, scanners, printers, faxes, photocopiers, landlines, blackberry devices, access cards, identification badges, protective clothing and stationery.

**Chief Executive of the Department:** the Director General of the Department of Local Government.

**Civic function:** a function that the 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.

**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:

- Preparing, attending and participating in council meetings, committee meetings, workshops, strategic briefings, deputations and inspections;
- Undertaking professional development opportunities;
- Attending civic functions or civic events;
- Attending public/community meetings, presentation dinners, annual general meetings where invited as a Councillor;
- Attending a community event (e.g. school fete, community group awards and presentations, fundraisers) where a formal invitation has been received.

**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:

- the provision of food or beverages:
  - for divisional community engagement activities such as community forums and meetings when initiated by the councillor; and
  - to demonstrate appreciation when a community group has assisted with a divisional project or service such as foreshore planting, beach clean up.

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- the provision of token corporate gifts to visiting dignitaries or where councillors are invited to speak to community groups/schools about council projects, services and programs; and
- the provision of wreaths at Anzac Day or similar state or national remembrance ceremonies.

**Mobile device:** includes mobile phones, smart phones, blackberry devices, iPads, iPhones 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 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:

- Conferences, workshops, seminars or training provided by a government department (e.g. Department of Local Government) or professional association;
- Study tours, conferences, workshops, meetings where a Councillor has been approved as Council's representative;
- New Council/Councillor orientation programs;
- Membership of professional or industry associations relevant to a Councillor's portfolio;
- Subscriptions to professional association or industry journals relevant to a Councillor's portfolio;

Note: Reimbursement of expenses incurred for travel, accommodation, meal and incidentals associated with professional development will be in accordance with 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.

**Token Corporate Gift:** an item or items with a combined value of less than \$100.00.

## POLICY STATEMENT/DETAILS

### 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.

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## 1.2 Limitation

This policy deals with reimbursement of expenses and the provision of facilities to councillors. It does not apply to the remuneration of councillors or to hosting of civic functions.

## 1.3 General entitlement:

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred while undertaking Council business and be provided with facilities to assist them in undertaking their duties, as described below.

## 1.4 Expenses

### 1.4.1 Professional Development

**Entitlement:** Councillors are encouraged to undertake relevant professional development and Council will reimburse the cost of reasonable expenses incurred for professional development where the activity falls within the definition prescribed in this document, and sufficient funding remains in the approved budget.

**Entitlement:** Councillors will receive a budget of \$4,400 per financial year for professional development and associated expenses as defined within this policy..

### 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:

- Council will book and pay for all travel under this policy;
- economy class travel is the standard, unless otherwise approved;
- travel is undertaken via the most direct route;
- requests for travel should be made in sufficient time to take advantage of discounts and gain access to the widest range of flights;
- travel tickets are not transferable;
- any fine issued while undertaking Council business is the responsibility of the Councillor incurring the fine;
- travel insurance is provided for all Councillors on Council business; and
- overseas travel is excluded from this policy.

**Entitlement:** Councillors may choose to utilise public transport. "Go Cards" and taxi vouchers are available for councillor use on council business.

### 1.4.3 Accommodation

**Entitlement:** Councillors are entitled to stay in accommodation to a maximum of 4 stars 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:

- Council will book and pay for all accommodation under this policy;
- accommodation offered as part of a conference package will be booked where practicable;
- where a councillor chooses to stay with friends or family, no accommodation expenses will be paid;
- Councillors may claim a *Daily Allowance* of \$20.00 per day to cover incidental costs (phone calls, newspapers, laundry/dry cleaning).

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## 1.4.4 Meals

**Entitlement:** Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for the cost of meals in accordance with the below Schedule of Rates for Meals, when undertaking professional development or council business outside the region, in accordance with the following conditions:

- The costs are incurred personally.
- The meal was not provided as part of the registration costs of the activity, event or included in the travel booking.
- In the case of alcoholic beverages Councillors obtain prior approval from the CEO.

### Schedule of Rates for Meals:

- Breakfast \$32.00
- Lunch \$25.00
- Dinner \$40.00

## 1.4.5 Hospitality

**Entitlement:** Councillors are entitled to reimbursement of reasonable costs for providing hospitality provided sufficient funding remains in the approved budget. In the case of alcoholic beverages Councillors are required to obtain prior approval from the CEO.

**Entitlement:** Councillors will receive a budget of \$1,000 per financial year for hospitality expenses as defined within this policy.

**Entitlement:** The Mayor is entitled to host civic functions in accordance with Council's Civic Functions policy. An amount over and above the hospitality entitlement for councillors will be allocated to civic functions on an annual basis.

**Entitlement:** Councillors are not entitled to be reimbursed or provided with funds for the purchase of alcoholic beverages without prior approval from the CEO.

## 1.4.6 Advertising

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

## 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.

### 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

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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 are entitled to be issued with business and communication tools to be able to perform their duties and undertake council business, in accordance with the following conditions:

- All tools are procured by the Council and are of the same standard as those available to senior management.
- All tools remain the property of the Council and must be accounted for during any audit and returned at the end of the councillors' term of office.
- 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. The requirement to reimburse 5% of the total call charges is not applicable to the Mayor.

**General entitlement:** 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:

- Personal call costs are recognised, in principle, as equal to 5% of the total call and data charges for a mobile device.
- This principle is subject to review, on a case by case basis, should it become evident to the CEO that 5% is reasonably insufficient for any individual councillor.
- Councillors will be invoiced on a periodic basis for costs attributable to personal calls.

### 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:

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

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**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.

## 2. Reporting

Councillors attending professional development activities will provide, at a minimum, a verbal report to the relevant Standing Committee.

A quarterly report will be provided to councillors detailing expenses in each of the categories that have been reimbursed.

A report summarising all expenditure in relation to this policy shall be included in Council's annual report.

## RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

*Local Government Act 2009*

*Local Government (Operations) Regulation 2010*

*Local Government (Finance, Plans and Reporting) Regulation 2010*

*Integrity Act 2009*

*Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*

*The Councillor Conduct Guide (CMC – October 2011)*

*Councillor Code of Conduct (8 June 2011)*

*Entertainment and Hospitality Policy (16 July 2009)*

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#### 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		