

Council Expenses Policy 2020

Department/Unit: <i>Governance</i>	First Implemented: 1 September 2020 Effective From: 1 September 2020 Review Date: 1 September 2024 Version: 1 Trim Reference: E513/2	Origin: Responsible Officer <i>Coordinator Governance & Risk</i> Authorising Officer: <i>Chief Executive Officer</i>
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PURPOSE

This policy supports Councillors, Council staff and members of delegated committees to perform their role, as defined under the *Local Government Act 2020*, by ensuring that expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their role are reimbursed.

This policy also provides guidance on:

- Entitlements
- Process for reimbursement
- Reporting requirements.

The policy is intended to ensure that Councillors, Council staff and members of delegated committees are supported to perform their duties without disadvantage.

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy is a requirement of Section 41(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. It seeks to ensure that the reimbursement of expenses is in accordance with the Act and meets the Act's principles of public transparency; achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community and ensuring the ongoing financial viability of the Council.

Councillors, Council staff and members of delegated committees will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses that:

- are bona fide expenses
- have been reasonably incurred in the performance of the role of Councillors, Council staff or as a member of a delegated committee; and
- are reasonable necessary for the Councillors, Council staff and member of delegated committee to perform their role.

Councillors are entitled to claim reimbursement of expenses incurred as a direct result of performing Councillor duties.



Members of delegated committees exercise powers of Councillors, under delegation. This policy also applies to those members in the course of undertaking Councillor duties in their role as delegated committee members.

All Council staff are entitled to claim reimbursement of expenses incurred as a direct result of their duties and responsibilities as an employee of Mansfield Shire Council, provided that it is a valid business related expense and is approved within Council's delegations of authority.

Valid business related expenses typically incurred by a Councillor, Council staff or a member of a delegated committee that may be reimbursed under this policy include:

- reasonable meal and accommodation costs;
- conference registration;
- parking fees;
- taxis;
- public transport;
- flights;
- training course fees.

Where Council resolves to provide a vehicle to the Mayor and the Mayor accepts such a vehicle, Council will provide a fully maintained vehicle to the Mayor in accordance with Council's Fleet Policy.

Carer and dependant-related expenses

Councillors and delegated committee members only are entitled to claim reimbursement of carer or childcare costs where provision of care for a dependant is reasonably required for a Councillor or member of a delegated committee to perform their role. This may include expenses such as hourly fees and booking fees, if applicable.

For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as a dependant aged under 16 years.

Payment for carer or childcare services will not be made to a person who resides with the Councillor or delegated committee member; has any financial or pecuniary interest with the Councillor or delegated committee member; or has a relationship with the Councillor, delegated committee member or their partner.

For a claim to be eligible for reimbursement, evidence of the expense and payment must be provided in the form of:

- a receipt for payment; or
- for expenses of \$82.50 incl GST and over, a tax invoice.

Claims will not be reimbursed for the purchase / payment of:

- gratuities/tips;
- alcohol;
- entertainment; or
- any other expenses not directly related to a Councillor, Council staff or member of delegated committees roles and responsibilities.



Councillor Resources and Facilities

This section applies to the other resources, facilities and services provided to Councillors to assist them in meeting the demands and expectations while conducting Council business.

Any equipment or resources remain the property of Council and must be returned within seven days of the expiration of a Councillor's term in office, retirement or resignation. Resources include all confidential electronic or hardcopy material obtained in a person's capacity as a Councillor.

Name Badge and Uniform

Each Councillor will be provided with a name badge for use on Council business.

The following uniform items will be made available to Councillors:

- Mansfield Shire logo Polar Fleece jacket
- Mansfield Shire logo Polar Fleece vest
- Mansfield Shire logo Raincoat

The Council shall, upon request, lend Councillors protective clothing required to assist in carrying out the duties of office. This clothing is to be returned promptly upon the completion of the activity/duty for which the articles were required.

This clothing shall be limited to Occupational Health and Safety equipment, as may be held in store to meet the organisation's requirements, unless otherwise resolved by Council for the specific item(s).

Communication

The Mayor and all Councillors are provided with the following equipment for Council use, and the expenses related to these items is covered by Council:

- A smart mobile telephone (currently an iphone)
- A tablet or equivalent (currently a laptop or ipad) to manage emails, receive agendas, minutes and other Council documents
- A printer, cartridges and paper (on request)

The make, model and specifications of any communications equipment, the associated contracts or plans, and the replacement of any communications equipment shall be at the discretion of the CEO or their delegate.

The above facilities remain the property of the Council and must be returned at the end of Councillor's term of office, retirement or resignation.

Whilst these items are provided for Council business use, it is recognised that for practical reasons, Councillors may undertake a reasonable number of non-Council business related activities.

Council will not reimburse home telephone expenses.



Any communication expenses that are incurred whilst undertaking travel for Council business will be reimbursed. For example, the use of internet in hotel rooms.

Stationery and Administrative Support

Administrative support will be made available by the CEO Executive Assistant to assist with managing the Mayoral calendar, and coordinating invitations to events and meetings that require Councillor attendance as part of their official duties as a Councillor.

The Council shall, upon request, provide Councillors with standard stationery held or obtained generally for the organisation's requirements. Standard stationery may include, but not necessary be limited to, paper, business cards, writing implements, diaries, writing pad/books, envelopes. Council's letterhead stationery is not available for Councillor use.

Stationery orders are to be lodged via email with the CEO Executive Assistant.

Councillor Room

A room is provided in the Council office for use by Councillors in the conduct of their duties of office. Councillor in-trays are provided in the Councillors room for the delivery of hard copy documents as required from time to time.

Building Access and Parking

Each Councillor will receive 24 hour access to the Mansfield Shire Council Chambers and catering area.

Mayor and Councillors will have access to use the Councillor Meeting Room (at the Mansfield Municipal Offices) during normal office hours. Councillors should enter via Reception.

Catering

Reasonable refreshments are provided during meetings of Council business.

Reasonable meals will be served during evenings of Committee, Council and other key meetings.

There is a provision of tea, coffee and biscuits in the Councillors' kitchen.

Giving of Gifts

In fulfilling their civic and ceremonial roles and responsibilities, Councillors will meet local, national and international delegates and officials.

In circumstances where the exchange of gifts between the host and visitor is considered courteous and expected as part of Council business, the gifts shall be organised and paid for by the Council.



The provision of corporate gifts by Councillors shall be authorised by the Mayor in discussion with the CEO and shall be of a standard considered appropriate for the event.

Health Initiatives

Councillors will have access to a free influenza vaccination each year.

SCOPE

This policy applies to Councillors, Council staff and members of delegated committees of Mansfield Shire Council.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All Councillors, Council staff and members of delegated committees of Mansfield Shire Council are responsible for adhering to and implementing this policy.

For Council staff, adherence to this policy will be overseen by all managers, with any associated procedures implemented by the Finance Manager.

The most senior officer responsible for a purchase that involves other employees, such as hospitality where others are present, must be responsible and accountable for the payment of that expenditure.

Individuals claiming reimbursement are responsible for:

- obtaining approval(s) to incur expenses from an authorising officer within their approved delegations. An individual may not approve the expenditure or reimbursement of expenditure in relation to themselves.
- obtaining guidance and adhering to these guidelines on the limits and conditions that apply to any expense claimed.
- providing original tax invoices/receipts or other proof of amounts expended.
- ensuring all relevant details are recorded on the claim form.

Authorising officers are responsible for reviewing expense claims to ensure:

- appropriate evidence is attached to the claim for eligibility
- expenditure has been incurred in accordance with this policy
- expenditure is coded to the appropriate general ledger expense code
- the expenditure is within the supervisors delegated authority to approve.



DEFINITIONS

The Act	the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>
Authorising officer	<p>In the case of a staff expense claim, a supervising officer with delegation to approve the expenditure incurred.</p> <p>In the case of a CEO, Councillor or delegated committee member expense claim, the Mayor.</p> <p>In the case of the Mayor's expense claim, the CEO.</p>
Carer	A carer is defined under section 4 of the <i>Carers Recognition Act 2012</i>
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Delegated Committee	Delegated committees are defined under section 63 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .
GST	Goods and Services Tax
Purchasing Card	Credit card issued to a Council staff member of Council's account.
Reasonable meal and accommodation costs	An expense for meals and accommodation will be considered reasonable where it does not exceed the relevant amounts set by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) as adjusted from time to time (see Appendix A)
Councillor duties	<p>Those duties performed by a Councillor as a necessary part of their role, in achieving the objectives of Council. These duties may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attendance at meetings of Council and its committees; • attendance at briefing sessions, workshops, civic events or functions convened by Council; • attendance at conferences, workshops and training programs related to the role of Councillor, Mayor or Deputy Mayor • attendance at meetings, events or functions representing Council; • duties in relation to constituents concerning Council business.
Child (for the purposes of claiming childcare expenses)	A dependant child under 16 years of age.



REFERENCES / RELATED POLICIES

Local Government Act 2020
Mansfield Shire Council Plan
Councillor Induction Manual
Councillor Code of Conduct
Mansfield Shire Council Employee Code of Conduct
Mansfield Shire Disciplinary Policy
Mansfield Shire Council Enterprise Agreement 2016
Fraud Prevention and Control Policy 2019
Purchasing Card Policy 2019
Procurement Policy 2019

IMPLEMENTATION

This Policy is effective from 1 September 2020.

REVIEW DATE

This Policy is to be reviewed by 1 September 2024

AUTHORISATION TO IMPLEMENT POLICY

Signed: _____



Councillor

Witnessed: _____



Chief Executive Officer

Approval dated: 1 September 2020

Mansfield Shire Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this Policy at any time.



Appendix A

Australian Tax Office

The table below outlines Council limits for business related accommodation and meals. The payment of gratuities, the purchase of liquor or entertainment are regarded as the responsibility of the Councillor, Council officer or member of delegated committee concerned.

Limits are based on ATO rates and will be updated annually to match the Tax Determination for reasonable travel and overtime meal allowance expense amounts for the relevant financial year.

Item	Limit
Accommodation (Melb) per night	\$228.00
Breakfast (when not supplied as part of accommodation) per day	\$30.60
Lunch per day	\$43.35
Dinner per day	\$60.65

Limits are based on ATO rates for 2019-20 (TD 2019/11 – table 2).



COUNCIL EXPENSES POLICY 2020 PROCEDURES

The following procedures are designed to provide clarity around Council expenses for Councillors, Council staff and members of delegated committees.

Any costs incurred by Councillors and members of delegated committees which are not covered specifically within this policy will not be covered by Council, unless the Councillor or member has received prior written authorisation from the Chief Executive Officer.

PART A – TYPES OF EXPENSES & EVIDENCE REQUIRED

CARER AND DEPENDENT-RELATED EXPENSES

For Councillors and Delegated Committee Members only

Claims must be accompanied by a tax invoice and receipt from the care provider showing the dates and times care was provided and detail the reason care was needed on each occasion.

TRAVEL

Domestic travel (within Victoria)

A Council vehicle will be made available for travel purposes if the fleet is not already fully utilised on the required dates and times.

Council vehicles should be booked through the Fleet Calendar in Microsoft Outlook, and keys can be collected from and returned to Customer Service at 33 Highett Street, Mansfield.

Carpooling should be facilitated where more than one Council member is attending the same event/meeting.

If travel includes the use of public transport or taxis, expenses will be reimbursed for the cost of such transport on the provision of a receipt for proof of travel.

Private vehicle use

Councillors, and members of delegated committees using their private vehicle to travel for Council related business, will be reimbursed petrol/depreciation allowance at the State Government Public Service standard.

For Council staff, the use of private cars is discouraged and will not be approved unless a Council vehicle is not available. Prior approval of a manager is required and the employee will be reimbursed at the rates outlined in the Mansfield Shire Council Enterprise Agreement.



To be reimbursed for use of private vehicles, claimants must provide adequate details of:

- The purpose of the trip
- Date and location
- Kilometres travelled
- Where appropriate, receipts for tolls, parking and petrol;
- Claims to be made on the official claim form.

Interstate or International Travel

In accordance with clause 98 of the *Local Government Planning and Reporting Regulations 2014*, details of all interstate and overseas travel must be provided to the Governance and Risk Coordinator to be recorded in Council's Register of Interstate and Overseas Travel which is available for public inspection.

In the instance of approved interstate or overseas travel:

- A Council vehicle will be made available for trips to NSW, the ACT or SA (if the individual prefers); or
- Flights will be arranged at the cost of Council.
- Whilst interstate, if a Council vehicle is not available, public transport will be utilised or a hire car arranged.

For Councillors, any interstate or international travel must comply with the following:

- Prior approval must be obtained from the Mayor, in discussion with the CEO.
- Travel proposals relating to the Mayor and Councillors will be the subject of a report to Council by the CEO.
- Where travel is by flight, the standard form of travel will be economy class.
- All travel and accommodation reservations should be booked and confirmed prior to departure through the CEO Executive Assistant.

Travel including Accommodation

When overnight accommodation is approved, Council will provide accommodation to a maximum value as listed in Appendix A of the Council Expenses Policy.

All reasonable meal and incidental costs associated will be met by the Council.

Accommodation should be arranged to achieve the best value for Council, booking accommodation with breakfast and parking included as the preferred option.

Share accommodation, whilst not compulsory, is encouraged if mutually acceptable.

Where there are no suitable accommodation options available within the value listed in Appendix A, Council will cover the cost of the cheapest suitable accommodation.

Suitable accommodation is:

- Located within an easily accessible distance from the required venue
- Of a reasonable standard of cleanliness and safety.



Should claimants select to stay at accommodation that is more expensive, where suitable alternatives are available, Council will only cover costs to the value listed in Appendix A of the Council Expenses Policy.

Miscellaneous Travel Provisions

Parking fees incurred while conducting Council business will be reimbursed on the basis of original receipts and relevant details regarding the purpose, date and time of the meeting or function.

Claimants may seek reimbursement of costs associated with tolls or those transactions incurred as part of existing personal e-tags accounts. Claims must be accompanied by copies of receipts or accounts detailing the individual transaction.

Council will not reimburse any infringement incurred for road, traffic or parking offences, including any fines incurred as a result of the use of tollways without an E-tag or pass.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION EXPENSES

All professional development expenditure should always be tested against the following criteria:

- Must be directly relevant to the individual's role at Council;
- Takes place and is able to be utilised during the individuals term of engagement with Council;
- Is in the interest of the community;
- Meets the budget determined by Council;
- Clearly offers and promotes public benefit as distinguished from private benefit.

Council will cover the cost of appropriate training and education expenses, within the parameters of the adopted Annual Budget.

Payment of registration fees should be made using a Council Purchasing Card or through direct invoicing from suppliers.

Approval for staff expenses will be given by their Manager.

Payment and bookings for Councillors and members of delegated committees will be made through the CEO Executive Assistant.

Industry Peak Body Provided Professional Development for Councillors

Councillors may request to attend professional development conferences/training provided by the following industry peak bodies:

- Australian Local Government Association (ALGA);
- Australian Local Government Womens. Association (ALGWA);
- Victorian State Government;
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) (note includes the Australian Institute of Company Directors Program); and
- Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA).



Council funded attendance at training/conferences provided by the specified industry peak bodies requires CEO approval. Councillors may apply to the CEO either verbally or in writing.

Non Industry Peak Body Provided Professional Development for Councillors

Councillors may request to attend professional development conferences/training not provided by specified industry peak bodies. Council funded attendance at training/conferences provided by non industry peak bodies requires Council approval.

Requests must be made by in writing to the Governance & Risk Coordinator and must contain the following information:

- The conference/training requested to be undertaken;
- The total cost of attendance; and
- How the conference/training contributes to their role as a Councillor.

All requests received will be attached to a report presented for approval at the next Council Meeting.

Presenter at a Conference

The Mayor and Councillors may receive invitations to speak at a conference in the capacity of a Councillor. It is the usual practice for conference organisers to pay registration fees and any travel and accommodation expenses of Councillors invited to be presenters.

Prior to agreeing to contribute as a presenter, any invitations should be referred to the Mayor, who will discuss with the CEO. Support can be provided from management in the preparation of material to assist the Councillor.

If a Councillor is paid a presentation fee by a professional conference organiser, this fee must be paid to Council. Payment to Council can be arranged by liaison with the CEO Executive Assistant.



PART B – MAKING A CLAIM FOR REIMBURSEMENT

There are two alternate methods for reimbursement, depending on the amount of expenditure, as described below:

Accounts Payable

Expense claims must be processed as a reimbursement through Accounts Payable.

A Prompt Payment Form is to be completed by the employee requesting reimbursement and approved by the supervisor in accordance with their financial delegation. A full description of the nature of the expense and the relevant general ledger code is to be detailed on the prompt payment form.

The relevant invoice must be attached to the prompt payment form. For items over \$82.50 (GST inclusive) a Tax Invoice must be obtained and attached accordingly.

The completed and authorised Prompt Payment Form together with the invoice is to be forwarded to Accounts Payable for processing in the next payment run.

Councillors can complete the Councillor Expense Form accessible through the Councillor Portal. Members of Delegated Committees will be provided with a claim form from the CEO Executive Assistant.

Authorisation of claims

Claims can be authorised by an authorising officer, defined as:

- In the case of a staff expense claim, a supervising officer with delegation to approve the expenditure incurred.
- In the case of a CEO, Councillor or delegated committee member expense claim, the Mayor.
- In the case of the Mayor's expense claim, the CEO.

For all expense claims of the Mayor and the CEO, the Finance Manager will co-sign the authorisation.

PART C - REPORTING

Travel Expense Reporting Requirements

The *Local Government (General) Regulations 2015* require Council to maintain travel register containing details of overseas or interstate travel (with the exception of interstate travel by land for less than three days) undertaken in an official capacity by Councillors or any member of Council staff in the previous 12 months. The register will be maintained by the Governance and Risk Coordinator and must include names, the date, destination, purpose and total cost of the overseas or interstate travel. The data will be separated across the following categories:

- Travel – Interstate;
- Travel – Overseas;
- Conferences and Functions;
- Communication – Interstate; and
- Communication – Overseas.



Publication of Councillor Expenses

In accordance with the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2014*, details of expenses incurred by the Mayor and Councillors of Mansfield Shire will be made public in Council's Annual Report of Operations.