

Reimbursement of Expenses and Support

PURPOSE

To provide guidance on reimbursement of expenses, provision of facilities and support for Councillors and Members of Council committees.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all elected Moira Shire Councillors, including the position of Mayor, and Members of Council Committees.

POLICY

Section 75B(1) of the *Local Government Act 1989* ("the Act") requires Council to adopt and maintain a policy in relation to the reimbursement of expenses for Councillors and members of Council committees.

1. Members of Council Special Committees

Guidance for Members of Council Special Committees is provided by Council's Committee of Management Operations and Risk Management Manual as follows:

Committee members or other members of the community may volunteer to do some work on a facility. The Committee may choose to reimburse volunteers for out of pocket expenses, but any additional payment will turn that volunteer into an employee.

Volunteers must submit a tax invoice detailing out of pocket expenses to the Committee. Prior to reimbursement, specific approval of the Committee is required to be recorded in the minutes of a properly constituted meeting.

2. Councillors

As required in the Victorian Government's policy statement on Local Government Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources - "Recognition and Support", Council will provide the following prescribed "minimum toolkit" for expenses, support and resources.

Resources/facilities mandatory

- Administrative support for the Mayor
- Office for Mayor
- Vehicle for Mayor
- Computer – desktop or laptop
- Mobile phone and landline
- Stationery
- Access to fax/copier
- Website development as part of Council website

Reimbursement

- Travel - including reimbursement of public transport costs
- Phone – reimbursement of relevant call costs
- Internet
- Child care/family care

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Additional support will be provided for Councillors as follows:

2.1. Access to a Council Pool Vehicle and Travel Expenses

- (a) Where requested a council vehicle will be provided, when availability permits, for a Councillor to attend an event that forms part of the Councillor's official duties.
- (b) Use of a council vehicle must be in accordance with Council's Motor Vehicle Policy, the Chief Executive Officer's Motor Vehicle Directive and Conditions of Use for a Council Motor Vehicle.
- (c) Where a Councillor chooses to use their private vehicle, reimbursement of expenses will in accordance with the Act and be at the per kilometre business rate set by the Australian Taxation Office.

2.2. Office Space and Facilities

A lounge and a small interview room will be provided for Councillors' use.

2.3. Legal Advice Expenses

The Council will only meet legal expenses incurred as a result of a Councillor executing their official duties. Councillors need to be aware of their role and responsibilities under the Act.

If a Councillor requires legal advice in connection with his or her functions as a Councillor:

- (a) The Councillor may submit a Notice of Motion requesting that Council facilitate and fund such legal advice; or
- (b) The Chief Executive Officer may facilitate such legal advice and confirm that Council will meet expenses when:
 - (i) appropriate to do so taking into the consideration the same criteria used by Council (below); and
 - (ii) the Councillor requirement for legal advice cannot be deferred until the lodgement or consideration of a Notice of Motion.
- (c) Council will evaluate any requirement by a Councillor for legal advice against the following criteria:
 - (i) the extent to which the subject-matter of the advice required relates to the Councillor's functions as a Councillor;
 - (ii) the extent to which the subject-matter of the advice required relates to a matter before Council or the Councillor's representative role as a Councillor;
 - (iii) the extent to which the subject-matter of the advice required will or is likely to be of interest to all Councillors;
 - (iv) the public interest; and
 - (v) any other relevant considerations.

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- (d) In the event that legal advice relates to a writ, action or pending action against a Councillor or Councillors, the Councillor or Councillors must supply a copy of the writ or action or provide the information which may lead to an action, to the Chief Executive Officer, who will advise Council's insurers as soon as possible, in accordance with Council's insurance policy conditions.

2.4. Other Expenditure

Any expenditure not specified in this policy will be the responsibility of the Councillor, except where the Chief Executive Officer grants approval.

2.5. Reporting Expenses

The Director Corporate and Community will submit a report annually to the Internal Audit Committee on the costs incurred by each Councillor during the past 12 months for travel, phone calls, legal expenses and any conferences or events attended.

2.6. Provision of Facilities and Support

(a) Administrative Support

- All Councillors will be provided with adequate administrative support using existing Council staff, so that official duties may be pursued in a professional manner.

(b) Communication

- Connection to Council's computer network, internet or email will be in accordance with the Use of Council's E-mail and Internet Facilities Policy.
- Where direct connection is provided, Council will meet the rental and other service charges related to it.
- Limited private use only is permitted of Council provided email, internet, facsimile and fixed or mobile phones.

(c) Corporate Uniform

- Each Councillor will be provided with a uniform allowance towards the actual cost of purchasing a corporate uniform, in accordance with Council's Corporate Uniform Policy and the Chief Executive Officer's Corporate Uniform Directive.

(d) Protective Clothing

- Councillors will be provided with protective clothing and head wear to assist in carrying out their duties.

(e) Stationery

- Upon request, provide Councillors with standard stationery held or obtained generally for organisational requirements.
- No Moira Shire Council letterhead will be provided.

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